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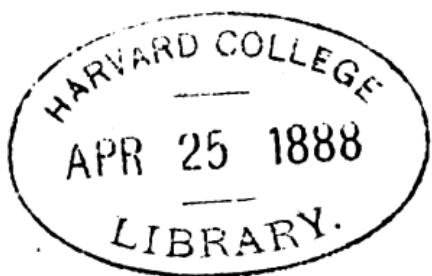


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THE
CLIFTON TRACTS,

BY THE

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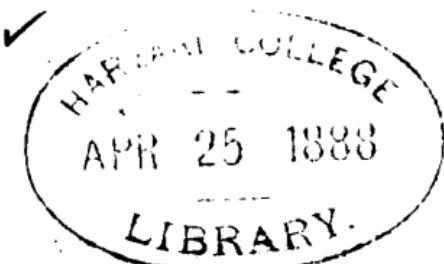
EDWARD DUNIGAN AND BROTHER
(JAMES B. KIRKEE,) 

181 FULTON STREET, NEAR BROADWAY.

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John Harvey Treat,
(I - IV.)

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The series of Tracts, the first volume of which is here given to the public, was originated with the view of supplying a want, long and generally felt, of a number of cheap single publications, which, at the same time that they afforded useful reading to Catholics and the numerous converts that from all sides are being gathered into the fold of the Church, might also furnish inquirers with a plain and simple statement of Catholic doctrines, principles, and practices, together with an exposure of Protestant errors, and a refutation of some at least among the many absurd, false, and calumnious charges brought by wicked or foolish men against the Catholic religion.

It cannot be doubted that there are multitudes in this land who, though external to the Church, and numbered among her adversaries, are in a state of honest and inculpable ignorance as to what it is to which they are opposed; hating, not the Catholic Church or her faith, of which they know nothing, but the monstrous parody set up to represent them by misbelievers; opposed therefore to that which, if it were what they have been taught that it is, would deserve the detestation of every religious mind.

To instruct persons so worthy of all sympathy, particularly among the humbler and less-educated classes, seemed one of those "spiritual works of mercy" which fell distinctly within the province of the Brotherhood of St. Vincent of Paul, an association especially devoted to the service of the poor, and which in France had already entered upon

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a similar field of exertion. The work was accordingly undertaken with the warm approval of his Lordship the Bishop of Clifton, to whom the plan was submitted by the two brothers on whom the editorial responsibility devolved, and with the encouraging sanction of all the Catholic Bishops of England.

The General Council of the Brotherhood in Paris, on being informed of the intended series of publications, manifested a cordial interest in the undertaking, and with Christian zeal and charity testified their desire to aid in its promotion by noticing the numbers in their monthly *Bulletin*. The Editors have also the gratification of being able to add, that his Holiness the Pope, unsolicited, was graciously pleased to send them his benediction upon the work; a boon in which they gratefully behold, not only the highest sanction which it is possible for them as Catholics to receive, but the surest pledge of the success of their labours.

The Editors take this opportunity to repeat their thanks to those individuals who have so kindly assisted them by their contributions, without the aid of which it would have been impossible for them to meet the expenses of publication. They are happy to say that the sale of the Tracts has hitherto been such as gives them every encouragement to proceed. But were every other earnest of success wanting, they might find one very promising sign in the treatment which the series has met with at the hands of certain unscrupulous writers, who employ imputation instead of confutation, and, evading the main argument, to which, however, they affect to address themselves, fasten upon some incidental statement or subordinate detail, in the hope, as it would seem, of diverting attention from the real point at issue. With such adversaries they have nothing to do, nor indeed with individual controversy in any shape. In arguing with Protestants, they desire to deal with

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broad and general principles, not to combat this or that man's opinion. It is Protestantism they assail, not the thousand varieties in which the so-called Protestant religion exhibits itself, or the ever-varying and contradictory arguments with which each man may be inclined to support his particular sect or view. Neither will they be drawn aside from their purpose to enter into a fruitless contest with those who dispute for mere disputing's sake. Their mission is to the thoughtful, the earnest, the single-minded, and the conscientious, who, not content to be seekers all their life, desire to *find* the truth, (2 Tim. iii. 7,) and having found it, are ready to embrace and confess it at any cost.

To "Our Lady of Good Counsel" and their holy patron St. Vincent, the Editors commend the good work thus begun, in the assured hope that they will not fail to plead in its behalf with Him who "chooseth the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the strong, and base things, and things that are contemptible, and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh may glory in His sight." (1 Cor. i. 27, 28.)

CLEPTON,

Octave of Corpus Christi, 1852.

THE CHURCH

THE GUARDIAN OF SCRIPTURE;

OR,

HOW DOES THE BIBLE COME
TO US?



NEW YORK:

EDWARD DUNIGAN AND BROTHER,

FULTON-ST. NEAR BROADWAY.

THE CHURCH THE GUARDIAN OF THE BIBLE.

IT is told of King Charles II. of merry memory, that he once proposed as a question to a grave scientific society, then just established under his royal patronage, how the fact was to be explained, that if a large fish were thrown into a tub quite full of water, the water would nevertheless not overflow the brim. Many and learned dissertations were written on the subject by different members of the society, and many were the theories which they devised to account for the extraordinary fact; until at last it occurred to some one among them to inquire whether it really was a fact; accordingly the experiment was tried, and the learned body standing round were made certain, by the undeniable evidence of a good splashing, that it was no fact at all.

Now it happens unfortunately that people are very much in the habit of acting in the same way as the grave society in question; that is, to take something for granted as a fact, and then reason upon it as such; and, more unfortunately still, they are not always so ready as these were to submit the said fact to the test of experiment; and this, too, in matters of far greater practical importance than the one propounded by King Charles.

Thus Protestants in general are in the habit of saying, without scruple or hesitation, that the Catholic Church is the enemy of God; and give as their reason for pronouncing upon her so harsh a sentence that she is the enemy of God's Word. "She hates the holy Scriptures," they say, "and therefore she must of necessity hate Him who is the author of them;" and having said this, they think they have so thoroughly made their point good as to defy contradiction. And so far they are right, that if their first assertion be true, their second follows as a matter of course; if we know of any that they hate God's Word, we cannot be far wrong in concluding that they also hate God. The only question, therefore, in this case is as to the matter of fact: Is the fact so?

Is the Catholic Church really the enemy of holy Scripture? And Protestants ought, in justice to us and to themselves, to look into the matter right well, and be very sure that their charge is a true one; otherwise they fall under the condemnation of those who bear false witness against their neighbor.

But, alas, they not only take this fact for granted, but also another, by which they explain and account for this. "The Catholic Church," they go on to say, "well knows that her own teaching and practices are altogether contradicted by holy Scripture, and therefore she hates it as bearing witness against herself."

Now if this awful charge be true, what line of conduct with respect to holy Scripture may naturally be looked for at the hands of the Catholic Church? Surely, nothing else but that she should pursue it unrelentingly, and use her utmost efforts to blot out every trace of it from the earth. If you had by ~~fraud~~ taken possession of an estate, and the very title-deeds proving it to belong to another had fallen into your hands, would it be long (supposing you wicked enough to persist in your ~~fraud~~) before you flung them to the flames?

Let us examine this matter, then, well, and try to inform ourselves how the Catholic Church has, in point of fact, dealt with the holy Scriptures.

That she has not destroyed them is certain, since you have them safe in your own possession. How did you come by them? You will say that they are part of your very birthright; that a Bible of your own, the gift perhaps of a godfather or godmother, was one of the first treasures of your childhood; and that even before you were old enough to have one of your own, you were already familiar with the sight of it on your mother's book-shelves. Then how did your mother come by it?—and her parents, and their fathers' fathers? "This brings us back," you will say, "to the glorious Reformers, who translated it into English." Well, but how could the glorious Reformers lay hold of it? It must have been forthcoming in some language or other in their time, or they could not have translated it. We must go back one step further; and this lands us on the undisputed territory of the Catholic Church. Until the days of the Reformers, that is, for more than fifteen hundred years from her beginning, she must have had the

Scriptures entirely in her own power; why did she not then destroy them?

Perhaps you will say that to destroy them would be a thing impossible; for they are so widely spread abroad, even to the ends of the earth, that if rooted out of one kingdom, they would still flourish and propagate themselves in another; and even the power of the Church, pervading all nations, as it did, could scarcely contend against the almost infinite number of copies into which the sacred volume has been multiplied. This is most true of the present day; but there is one thing to be remembered, which makes a difference—vast almost beyond calculation—between the condition of the world now as to books, and that of earlier ages. I mean, the art of printing, which was not discovered until more than fourteen hundred years after our Lord's birth. A little thought will bring before our minds, at least in some measure, the greatness of the change which that discovery must have brought about; and we ought to think upon it, if only that we may bless God for having bestowed so rich a gift on these latter days.

We are so used now to get books easily, and at small cost, that we can hardly fancy

how far otherwise it was with our forefathers. But only let us consider for a moment what a simple, rapid process printing is, and how much it accomplishes. A number of letters called types set in a frame, then wetted with a particular kind of ink, and one sheet of paper after another pressed down upon them by machinery with the quickness of thought, and each in turn receiving the impression of the letters,—such are the simple means by which copies of a book may be multiplied to any extent with but little increase of trouble: when the types are once set, to strike off a thousand copies, or ten thousand, is a work easily and rapidly performed. Only compare this with the slow and toilsome process of writing out, which was the only means known to man of multiplying copies of books before this great discovery of printing was made. Think, too, of the length of the Bible, of the time and labor which it would require to transcribe it, and therefore of the cost of such an undertaking; and you will see at once that Bibles must necessarily have been very scarce in those days compared to what they are now; so scarce that the rulers of the Church might surely have succeeded in de-

stroying them, if their minds had been set upon it; more especially if the ages in question were really so dull and ignorant as the name usually given to them of "the dark ages" would lead people to suppose.

If, then, having it in her power to destroy the Scriptures, the Church did not destroy them, it is but fair to conclude that she did not desire to do so. But such an admission, which every honest inquirer must needs make, is far, very far short of the truth. Not only did she not destroy them, but it was she who first gathered them up into their present form; she kept them safe through Pagan persecutions at the expense of her own blood; she preserved them through ages of ignorance and violence; and afterwards multiplied copies of them, adorning them with all that art and wealth could furnish, and making them the centre of her whole circle of sacred learning; in a word, the Church has been in every age the Guardian of the Bible.

It may sound strange, and to some perhaps even profane, to speak as if the Bible needed any guardian; but you must remember that, after all, the Bible is but a book; and a book can no more have preserved itself than it can

have written itself. Of course, Almighty God, if He had so willed, might both have written it and preserved it without using human instruments at all; but we know that, in point of fact, He has *not* done so. It has been his will that the Bible should be both written and preserved by men; written by men inspired of God for that purpose, and preserved by the Catholic Church; and this last point it is which I wish to set before you at present.

First, then, it was the Church which collected the scattered parts of Scripture, or at least of the New Testament Scriptures, with which we are here more immediately concerned, into their present form. People are apt to think of the Bible as if it were a whole without parts, indivisible, self-existent, in short, a kind of Divinity; or at least, as if it had come down from heaven precisely such as we now have it, ready bound to our hands, if not with the Bible Society's stamp upon it. But the fact is far otherwise; both the Old and New Testament Scriptures are made up of many different portions, written one after another at intervals more or less distant. It was not until the time of Esdras, (or Ezra,) that is, almost a thousand years after the first four,

books of the Bible were written by Moses, that they and the other books which had been added through succeeding ages were collected into the single volume which we call the Old ~~Testament~~ ✓ Testament; and as to the New Testament, though this was all written in the course of one generation, yet it was by no means at the same time, for between the writing of the earliest Gospel by St. Matthew, and that of the latest by St. John, there was an interval of almost half a century; and not only were the several books written at different times, but those to whom they were respectively addressed were far divided from each other by land and sea. In process of time, however, the scattered portions were brought together, and carefully examined by councils, that is, by assemblies of bishops of the Catholic Church; and being gathered at last with the Scriptures of the Old Testament into a single volume, were called the Bible, that is, *the book*; the sacred Book of God and the Church.

I shall have an opportunity of telling you more about this early period another time; at present I must go on to show you how this sacred book was preserved and guarded by the Church in after-ages against the rage of

heathen persecutors, at the expense of the blood of her most faithful and devoted children. Read the account given us in history of the martyrdom of Felix, bishop of Tibiura, a small place in Africa. The chief magistrate of the town, acting on orders just received from the Roman emperor, went to him, and demanded the sacred Scriptures. "I have them," said Felix; "but I will not give them up." "The word of the emperor," answered the magistrate, "must prevail over your saying: give them to me, that I may burn them." "It were better," replied Felix, "that you should burn me than the divine Scriptures; for God must be obeyed rather than man." The magistrate persisted; but Felix continuing firm in his refusal, he gave him three days for reflection, and then, finding his mind unchanged, sent him to the proconsul, or chief governor of the province, who loaded him with chains, and threw him into prison. Again and again he summoned him into his presence; but he constantly said the same thing: "I have the holy Scriptures in my possession; but I will not give them up:" so that at last, having been sent from place to place, and from governor to governor, he was condemned to

die by the sword, and as he bowed his head to receive the blow, he thanked our Lord Jesus Christ that he had preserved the Gospel. Another was brought before the judge with the sacred volume in his hand. "Read," said the judge, in mockery; the holy confessor opened the book and read: "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and again: "If any one will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me." "What means that?" asked the judge; and Euplius (such was the name of the holy martyr) told him that it was the law of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. On which confession he was delivered up to the torture; and, before it began, they asked him tauntingly what he would now say on the matter; when he, making the sign of the cross on his forehead, answered: "I confess again what I said before; I am a Christian, and I read the holy Scriptures." Then they asked him why he had kept those books against the command of the emperors, instead of giving them up: "Because," he said, "I am a Christian, and it is not lawful for me to give them up: I had rather die." Then they put him to the tor-

ture ; and throughout his agonies he kept continually giving thanks to our Lord ; and even when his voice had failed him through extremity of pain, his lips still moved in praise. When the torture was ended, he was condemned to death, and led forth to execution, with the copy of the Gospel, which had been found upon him, hung round his neck. These are only two instances among very many ; for this was a persecution of exceeding fierceness, and for the most part endured with noble constancy. Some there were, indeed, as might be expected, who yielded to the force of torture ; but they were held a scandal and a shame to their brethren. To them first was applied the name of *traitor*, (which means, "giver up,") infamous in all ages ; and it was not till after long and severe penance that they were restored, if at all, to the communion of the faithful.

Thus you see how the Church was the guardian of the Bible through the ages of persecution ; but you will say perhaps that these were early days ; that the Church was not then corrupt as the Catholic Church is now, but pure and holy like a Protestant Church ; and that therefore her hatred of holy Scripture had not yet begun. How comes it

then, that it is the Catholic Church which at the present day bears in loving remembrance those who thus died for the Scriptures, honoring them among her white-robed army of martyrs; while by Protestant Churches their names are never so much as mentioned? The Catholic Church commemorates the first of these noble martyrs, St. Felix, on the 24th of October, and St. Euplius on the 12th of August; whereas the Protestants never commemorate them at all; they know nothing whatever about them.

But let us next go on to inquire what the conduct of the Catholic Church has been with reference to holy Scripture during those after-ages, when, in the opinion of Protestants, the mystery of iniquity within her was fully developed. How did the Church behave towards the Bible during "the dark ages?"

Scarcely had the age of persecution passed, when a season of ruin and desolation followed, not to be equalled in the history of the world. At the time of our Lord's coming, the empire of pagan Rome, extending over almost the whole earth, was at the very highest point of its power. But, it soon began to tend downwards, and in the course of a few hundred

years fell utterly; its ruin having been prepared long ago by its own inward and continually increasing corruption, and being brought about at last by one invasion after another of fierce barbarians, who poured down in hordes from their northern forests, carrying devastation wherever they went, and overran in turn all the provinces of the Western Empire. Of these were our own forefathers, the Anglo-Saxons, who conquered England; another tribe, the Franks, made themselves masters of Gaul, now called, from them, France; another rushed into Spain, and others poured down into the fair lands of Italy, and seized on the very capital of the empire, the city of Rome itself. Six times was that city besieged, taken, and plundered; three times regularly sacked, and on one of these occasions the pillage lasted for fourteen days. Numbers of the people were slaughtered—numbers were made slaves and shipped off to other countries, and pestilence and famine swept away thousands who had escaped the sword. All public and private buildings were ransacked again and again for gold or silver, and then for the most part wantonly burnt or pulled down, till nothing remained of the

"Queen of Nations" but a mass of melancholy ruins. One can scarcely imagine any thing more dreadful than for a people like the Romans, who were as polished and luxurious as we ourselves are at the present day, to fall suddenly into the hands of barbarians utterly ignorant of arts and letters and all that belongs to civilized life, and thirsting only for war and plunder. And wherever they went, through all the countries of Europe, they swept away every thing that opposed their progress; so that, in the language of the prophet, "the land was as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."

How came it, that amidst this universal wreck, the holy Scriptures escaped destruction? The Bible, as we have said before, is but a book, and books are made of materials peculiarly destructible, especially by fire; and these barbarians were altogether ignorant of their value, and little likely to take any pains to spare them. If they set fire without remorse to beautiful buildings, and allowed pictures and statues to perish in flame and ruin, it is scarcely to be supposed that they would have any scruple in leaving scrolls of parchment to

their fate. What, then, saved the holy Scriptures? The Catholic Church.

Yes, it was to the Catholic Church, and to her only, that we owe their preservation, as a little thought and examination will make manifest. In the first place, she alone preserved the Latin language, the only one in which the Scriptures were understood in western Europe, and into which, therefore, they had been translated from the very times of the Apostles. For very soon after the barbarians had become masters of Italy, this ceased to exist as the spoken language of the people, and gradually mixed itself up with the tongues of the different conquering nations, so that it would have been lost altogether in a short time, if the Church had not made it her own by using it in her sacred offices. Then, again, that there were any who could use a pen at all so as to be able to make copies of holy Scripture, and any who could read the copies so made, was her work only. When the thickest ignorance covered the whole world, she always in her priesthood kept up a succession of persons who must necessarily have received a considerable amount of education. There never was a time, even in the very depths of all these

miseries, when the arts of reading and writing were lost; and that they were not lost was entirely owing to the Church.

However, this night of ignorance did not last very long; gleams began to appear here and there, and, by degrees, a new literature, new arts, a new and better civilization sprung up out of the ruins of the old. And by whose means was this revival brought about? Again, it was the Catholic Church; she converted one by one those fierce nations who were then masters of the world; and as she converted, she also civilized them. Wherever her empire extended, and it was wider than even the empire of pagan Rome had been, of which she took the place, there arose, as ages went on, not only churches and cathedrals, which are the admiration and wonder of the present day for their beauty and vastness, but schools also and universities; while music, poetry, and painting sprang up as flowers under her feet. Now what was the centre, so to speak, of all this wide circle of civilization? What was the point round which turned all these manifold studies and pursuits? It was no other than holy Scripture. Was music cultivated? it was for the chanting of psalms. Was poetry

cherished? its chief themes were the mysteries recorded in Holy Writ. Was painting in repute? its subjects were taken principally from the Bible. At that time it was manifestly impossible that the Bible should be in the hands of individuals, or even of private families. A Protestant writer calculates that a copy made by hand of the English Protestant Bible, "paid for at the rate at which law-stationers pay their writers for common fair copy, on paper, would cost between sixty and seventy pounds for the writing only; and the scribe must be both expert and industrious to perform the task in less than ten months." This being the case, instruction could not then be conveyed to the multitude in the way in which we now try to do it, by making them read for themselves; they could only be taught by word of mouth: and what help pictures give to such teaching, all know who have any experience. Accordingly, on the walls of church or convent were traced representations of the Gospel mysteries, or the events of the Old Testament symbolical of these; and the painter, often himself a monk, was used to prepare himself for his work by prayer and profound meditation on holy Scripture.

Indeed, meditation on holy Scripture was the great business of the Catholic monks. "I have been in this monastery," says the venerable Bede, a saint of England, "ever since I was seven years old; and during all that time I have given my mind to meditation on the holy Scriptures." And St. Gregory the Great, the Pope to whom England owes her Christianity, found time, in the midst of all his many labors, to study and write commentaries on several books of holy Scripture. In fact, no one could be a monk or a priest without being necessarily familiar with many parts of the Bible. The Gospels, the Psalms, formed in turn a part of their regular daily devotion; indeed, the Psalms were always on their lips, whether in the quiet of their own churches and cloisters, or while journeying along the road.

Thus we read of an English bishop in those days, who, when travelling with his clergy, required that they should be continually reciting psalms; and it is told of a holy monk, St. Bernard, that while engaged in this pious exercise, his mind was so absorbed in it that he walked along the shores of the most beautiful lake in Switzerland without

seeing any thing, or being conscious of where he was.

Holy Scripture was read aloud in convents during meals ; and it is told even of private individuals that they followed the same practice in their own families. In every university too of Europe there was, as a matter of course, a professor whose business it was to lecture on holy Scripture. In short, the more we try to penetrate into the spirit of those times, the more we see that the Word of God was truly “a light to the feet and a lamp to the paths.”

All this, however, you may say, bears but indirectly on our present subject. To sing psalms, to paint holy pictures, to write sacred poems, even to write commentaries, was not the same thing as preserving the sacred text, and handing it down to us “pure and undefiled ;” and no one says that the Catholic Church hates every thing that is in Scripture, but only that she hates the Bible, as a whole.

This brings us back to our first question : Who, then, preserved the Bible, the sacred text itself, through all these long ages ? And to this question but one answer can be given, the Catholic Church : the chief means by which she preserved and perpetuated it

was the pious toil of her monks; of those, whom Protestants mark with an especial brand, as the builders-up, beyond all others, of corrupt superstitions, and consequently as the inveterate enemies of the Gospel. Yes, if you will take the trouble to study a little the history of these ages, you will see that Bibles, costly as they were, and laborious as was the task of transcribing them, were to be found in every church or monastery which could by any means procure them; and to be without them was considered either a disgrace or a misfortune. "A monastery without a library," writes a monk of the twelfth century to another monk, "is like a castle without an armory: our library is our armory, whence we bring forth the sentences of the Divine law, like sharp arrows, to attack the enemy. See to it, therefore, that in your armory of defence, that which is the great defence of all the other defences is not wanting. I mean, the holy Bible, wherein is contained the right rule of life and manners;" and by and by he concludes with these words, "Farewell, and take care that the Bible, which no monastery should be without, is bought." We read, too, of the abbot of a small monastery in Italy, about the

middle of the eleventh century, who paid ten pounds (equal to at least five times the same sum now) for a Bible for the use of his monks, at a time when they were scarcely able to afford themselves even the necessaries of life; and when not even the abbot himself had two suits of clothes. We are told, too, of an English bishop in the eighth century going down to Dover to watch the unloading of some French ships, and choosing from all their stores a great Bible, which he bought for his church. So, too, we hear of a party of Normans pillaging a French convent, and carrying off many captives, who afterwards contrived to escape while the robbers were quarrelling among themselves. They could not, however, recover and carry away with them all the spoil that had been taken; only one made a bold attempt to recover what they cared about most, a great Bible, which he bore with some difficulty back to the convent. In a word, not to multiply instances, the number of manuscript copies of the Bible now existing, taken together with the number of whose loss and destruction in different ways accounts have come down to us, are the astonishment of all who examine the subject; and show a diligence and perseve-

rance, as well as a value for the sacred word, which it would be difficult to match. If we none of us could possess a Bible without copying out every word of it ourselves, or paying sixty or seventy pounds to some one to do it for us, I think the possessors of Bibles would be soon counted. And that was really the state of things in the ages of which we are speaking; and transcribing Bibles was one of the regular employments of the monks. Thus we read of an abbot who had twelve of his monks trained to be very excellent writers, and committed to them the task of copying the holy Scriptures. And this is only a sample of what was going on in all the monasteries, on a larger or smaller scale, according to the number of their members. Nuns, too, spent their lives sometimes in the same occupation. One nun alone copied out with her own hand two whole Bibles; and besides this, made six copies of several large portions of the Gospels and Epistles. It is recorded of some bishops and abbots too, that they wrote out with their own hands the whole both of the Old and New Testaments for the use of their churches and monasteries. In fact, one may say with truth that scarcely a day, or even an hour, passed

during those hundreds of years, in which some pious hand of Catholic monk or priest, or somebody employed by them, was not engaged in transcribing the Word of God.

How is it, then, you will say, that if the Church was indeed so active in multiplying copies of holy Scripture, while it had to be done by hand, she set herself so vigorously against the same thing, when the art of printing was discovered? How is it that even the glorious Reformer Luther (himself a monk) was ignorant of the very existence of such a book as the Bible, until he one day accidentally found it? How is it, indeed! It is so difficult to explain how it is, that one is led to recollect the story with which this tract began; and so, to go a little further, and ask whether *it is* at all; I mean, whether the fact is so. And the least examination shows us what falsehoods have been imposed upon our good countrymen on this subject. Will it be believed that before Luther was born, there were at least twenty different editions of the whole Bible, printed in Germany alone; that is, in Luther's own country? Yet such is literally the fact. At Naples also, at Florence, at Venice, (where eleven editions had been published,) and at

Rome, under the especial patronage of the Pope, the same work was going on. These are facts which no one who has studied the matter attempts to deny; and yet, in the very teeth of these, Protestant historians have dared to assert that Luther grew up to manhood, and that in a monastery, without knowing of the existence of a Bible!

Perhaps you will say that though the facts we have mentioned disprove the ridiculous story about Luther, which scarcely needs disproving, yet that they do not altogether clear the character of the Catholic Church in the matter of holy Scripture; inasmuch as all these copies of the Bible were no doubt in Latin; and therefore as effectually shut up from the public at large as if they did not exist.

Now, the question of translation of the Bible belongs rather to another branch of our subject which we shall take in hand on another occasion; our present purpose is only to prove that the Church has preserved to us the text of holy Scripture. We may just mention, however, that at the time when the Scriptures were first translated into Latin, Latin was the spoken language of almost the whole of west-

ent Europe; and therefore it was in order that the Scriptures might be understood by the people, not that they might be holden from them, that such translation was made. When, as we have seen, the Latin died away from common use, and the languages of the conquering barbarians began to take form, translations of the whole or parts of Scripture were made in them from time to time. The venerable Bede, a Catholic monk in England, whom we have before mentioned, died in the very act of dictating the last sentence of his translation into Anglo-Saxon of the Gospel of St. John. The Catholic Church has translated the Bible into Syriac, into Ethiopic, into Arabic, into French, German, Italian, Belgic, English; in short, into almost every language of the world. Some of these translations were made in the very earliest ages, and most of them before the "glorious Reformation" was dreamt of, or the "glorious Reformers" were yet even in their cradles.

Let every honest Protestant, then, indignantly throw back the falsehoods which are so shamelessly palmed upon him; and acknowledge that, if he has a Bible in his possession, he owes it, in the first instance, to the Catholic

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Church; that it was she who preserved it safe through successive periods, first, of heathen persecution; then, of barbarism and darkness; and lastly, of that civilization and light which she herself had called into being; in a word, that she has been in all ages, and under all circumstances, the Guardian of holy Scripture.

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THE CHURCH

THE WITNESS OF SCRIPTURE;

OR,

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT THE
BIBLE IS?



NEW YORK:

EDWARD DUNIGAN AND BROTHER,

FULTON-ST. NEAR BROADWAY.

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE IS?

WE have already shown you* that it is to the Catholic Church alone that Protestants are indebted for the possession of that sacred volume of which they revile her as the enemy, inasmuch as but for her, it must, humanly speaking, have perished long ago from the face of the earth. This, however, is but a small part of the debt they owe her; the preservation of the Bible they may look upon as a service long past, and therefore, according to the ordinary practice of mankind, may consider themselves justified in throwing aside the remembrance of it. Scripture, they think, no longer needs a guardian, nor ever can need one again; for, by means of the art of printing, its copies have been multiplied and diffused

* See *The Church the Guardian of Scripture.*

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to an extent which defies all future danger of destruction: "It little matters to us," they may say, "who kept it in times past; we will keep it for the time to come, or it will keep itself." But there is a further service which the Catholic Church has not only rendered them in ages gone by, but which she continues to render them at the present day, and which is needed by them at the present day quite as much as it ever was; that, namely, of bearing witness to Holy Scripture. She has not only secured to them the possession of the Word of God, but that also without which such possession would be of little value,—the knowledge that it *is* the Word of God. If Holy Scripture no longer requires a guardian, it still requires a witness as much as ever; nay increasingly, as years roll on, and remove us further and further from the time when it was originally put forth among men. And this witness, *the only sure witness*, is the Catholic Church.

Why do Protestants believe in the Bible? This is surely but a fair and reasonable question to ask of men who profess to make the Bible their sole rule of faith. We are told over and over again, that "the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants,"

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meaning, we suppose, the foundation, the groundwork of their religion,—that upon which their religion is built. The Bible is to them what St. Paul says the Church is, (1 Tim. iii. 15,) “the pillar and ground of the truth;” that is, they believe in Christianity because they believe in the Bible. It would be but reasonable, then, on their parts, resting, as they do, their whole belief on the Bible alone, to make very sure their grounds of belief in the Bible itself. We have read of certain adventurous mariners in the Polar Seas, who, after walking northwards with all perseverance for upwards of forty miles, found, after all, when they came to make their observations, that they were considerably further to the south than when they set out; the broad plain of ice on which they were walking having steadily drifted southward all the while, and with much more rapidity than they were urging their toilsome way to the north. Even so it may be with those who do not look well to the foundations of their faith; the very ground on which they stand may be sliding away in one direction, while they are straining in another. What becomes of the whole belief of a Protestant, if the Bible be not the Word of God?

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That point, then, that it *is* the Word of God should surely be thoroughly made good by them, established by such sufficient reasons as really to satisfy their own minds, and to furnish them with an answer to all gainsayers.

Yet Protestants in general leave this very point, so all-important to them, uncared for, and themselves in utter ignorance about it. What ought to be proved is carelessly taken for granted; and, while they are very conversant, it may be, with the text of Scripture, (at least with the letter of it, knowing perhaps whole chapters by heart,) they have never even asked themselves this simple question: Why they believe in it? why they believe it to be the Word of God?

Their reason, however, for thus neglecting so important a question is not very difficult to discern. The fact is, that the answer to it throws out in bold relief the inconsistency of the whole Protestant system; for when we trace back their belief in the Bible step by step, from authority to authority, we find that the authority on which it rests at last is the Catholic Church; that very Church from whose bosom they have torn themselves away, which they denounce as corrupt, and full of foul de-

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ceits, nay, as Antichrist, the man of sin; and therefore it is not very wonderful that they should be shy of investigating the matter. To find that their belief in the Bible rests at last on the testimony of Antichrist might stagger the simple-minded, and lead to misgivings which their teachers might not find it altogether easy to remove.

Yet on what testimony but that of the Catholic Church do Protestants rest their belief in the Bible? Those of the present day of course received it from their parents and teachers in their childhood, and took it on trust from them without inquiry; so that, with all their hatred of "tradition," it is manifest, that for this foundation-stone of their whole religion, it is to tradition alone that they are indebted. But so far this is a mere human tradition, and one not to be implicitly depended upon; parents and teachers have no promise of infallibility, and are, as we know, very often mistaken. Mahometan parents and teachers teach their children that the Koran is the word of God; why must our parents and teachers necessarily be right? Perhaps you will go back a step further, and say that the sect to which they belonged, Wesleyans, or Baptists, or whatever

they might be, receive these Scriptures, and that they received them on the authority of their sects. Here is tradition again; and still a mere human tradition: what authority has that sect? Had it any promise of being divinely guarded from error? and, as a mere human witness, how could it know any thing of the matter, having sprung into being so many hundred years after the latest Scripture was written? Where did that sect, then, get its knowledge concerning Scripture? The next step leads you back to the Established Church, the oldest Protestant communion in Great Britain; for the translation of the Bible put forth under her auspices was adopted without inquiry by almost all the other sects.

This said translation is dedicated to his majesty King James I. in a very pompous preface, wherein he is addressed as "the sun in his strength," and the nation is congratulated on his having arisen to cheer it after the setting of "that bright occidental star, Queen Elizabeth of happy memory;" and as it seems from this said preface that the translation was made at his command, we may suppose that he guaranteed to his people that the volume thus presented to them by him, the supreme head of

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their Church, was the true inspired Word of God, as in the translation, so, of course, in the "original sacred languages" from which it was taken. But on what authority did he speak? Does any one suppose that he, or the "bright occidental star" who went before him, had any supernatural gift of discernment, whereby to know what was the inspired word? Had the Church over which he presided any such? Certainly not, according to her own showing; for she herself declares in one of her articles of religion, that "particular churches may err;" and if on other points, so also in this. On what authority, then, did she receive the Scriptures? A chasm of more than 1500 years separated her, just sprung into being, from the age in which those Scriptures were written: how was this chasm bridged over? But one answer can be given: by the Catholic Church.

She alone it was who could reach back to the times of the Apostles, and so give her testimony in this matter; and her testimony was accepted even by her revolted children. As it was from her hands alone that they received the sacred volume itself, so also was it from her lips alone that they received the knowledge of what that volume was,—that it was the in-

spired Word of God. Why they believed her in this matter without question or hesitation, and disbelieved her in almost every other, it is not for us to explain; but such was the simple fact.

Some, indeed, unwilling to be thus beholden to her, assert that the Bible needs no witness, being a sufficient witness to itself; but those who thus talk can never have realized the number, complication, and difficulty of the questions with which this subject is entangled, and can never have tried to make out in their own minds what they should think and feel about the Bible, if it were really presented to them for the first time without any evidence concerning it, but such as may be gathered from its own pages. It is indeed almost impossible for people to put from them, even in thought, the traditions which have grown round them from their childhood; and so, whenever they take up the Bible, coming to it with an undoubting belief in its inspiration already ingrained into their minds, they find in it a great deal which harmonizes with and corroborates that belief; and so they are apt to imagine that it is on what they read in the Bible that the belief itself is grounded; where-

as, in reality, they take up the Bible with that belief already established; a much smaller amount of evidence being sufficient to strengthen an opinion once formed, than we should have required for the original formation of that opinion.

The mass of mankind would certainly never be able, from the mere study of the Bible itself, even to prove to themselves its genuineness: I mean, that its several books were really written at the time and place at which they profess to have been written, or by the persons whose names they bear; still less could they prove to themselves its truth, that its historical parts are the record of real events, or its prophetical parts the record of true prophecies. For if the New Testament bears witness in some measure to the truth of the Old, we still want a witness to the New; otherwise the whole falls to the ground. I do not mean that there are no evidences to the genuineness of the different books of Scripture, or to the truth of much that they contain, to be gathered from their own pages, for many and learned works have been written to gather up such evidences; but I mean, that they are, of their very nature, too subtle and delicate to be the groundwork

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of a universal belief. And even if the genuineness of Scripture could be satisfactorily proved from its own pages, and the truth of its contents established in the same way, or by evidences drawn from other books, all this would by no means prove its inspiration; no; not even if the facts, the truth of which has been thus established, were of such a nature that they could only be known to man by a direct communication from God. This would prove indeed that the book contains the record of a revelation, but it would by no means prove the inspiration of the record itself, still less that of any thing else contained in the same book. For instance, supposing it proved beyond dispute, that the book of Genesis is really the work of Moses, and supposing it proved further, (if it were possible,) that all it recounts is perfectly true, this would by no means prove that the book is inspired. It would prove that a revelation had been made from God, because several of the events related, such as those preceding the creation of Adam, could not otherwise have been known to man. But it does not even follow that the revelation was made to Moses; it might have been made to Adam, or to Seth, or to Noah, and handed down to

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Moses by tradition; or even if made to Moses himself, this would not prove that he was inspired in recording it, still less that he was inspired in any thing else that he wrote.

To take another instance. There is, as we know, a famous prophecy of Daniel, predicting the rise and fall of the four great empires of the world, and the establishment of the kingdom of God, the Church, on their ruins. Now, it is quite certain that this prophecy was written before the establishment of the Christian Church, because it is to this day in the hands of the Jews, who have certainly received no additions to Scripture since that time; and therefore its wonderful fulfilment sufficiently testifies that it was a true prophecy. But it does not follow that the person who recorded it (even if it could be proved to have been Daniel himself by whom the prophecy was spoken) was inspired in the act of recording it; still less, that any thing else to be found in the book bearing his name is inspired; and far less, again, that the whole Bible is inspired because this book is among its contents.

So, too, with the New Testament Scriptures. To prove that they were really written by those whose names they bear, and that the

facts they record really happened, is not sufficient to prove their inspiration. Some may say, that to prove a book to have been written by an Apostle would be the same thing with proving it to be inspired; but St. Barnabas is spoken of in the Acts (xiv. 13) as an Apostle, and also as one full of the Holy Ghost; yet an epistle of his which has come down to us, and of whose genuineness there is no doubt, is not considered as inspired Scripture. And several of the books of the New Testament are written by those who were not Apostles at all, as St. Mark and St. Luke. What is there on the face of it to prove that these last were inspired, any more than St. Clement and St. Hermas, who were, like them, friends and companions of the Apostles, and of one of whom (St. Clement) St. Paul says that his name was "written in the book of life," whose writings, nevertheless, though some of them are undoubtedly genuine, and all no doubt containing true doctrine, yet nobody holds to be inspired?

Taking for granted, as even Protestants do in this country, the inspiration of Holy Scripture, they have never examined the question sufficiently to be aware how impossible it is to

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gather sufficient evidence of it from the pages of Scripture itself, and how entirely, therefore, the belief in it rests on external testimony. What is there in the structure of any part of Scripture to indicate it? It nowhere assumes the form of an address from God to man, but in some parts, as in the Book of Psalms, of an address from man to God, and in all the rest, from man to his fellow-man—now in historical narratives, and now in moral and spiritual lessons. The nearest approach to an address from God is in the Books of the Prophets; and there we are only presented, as we have said before, with a record of revelations made by God to His Prophets, and by them spoken to His people before they were thus recorded. Not a single passage can be quoted, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of the Apocalypse, in which the writer declares himself to be writing from inspiration. Some people, indeed, quote that saying of Paul, (2 Tim. iii. 16,) "All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable," &c., (or, as the Protestant version renders it, "*All Scripture is* written by inspiration of God,) as a triumphant proof of the inspiration of the Bible, the comprehensive word, "*all Scripture,*" settling the question, as they think,

entirely. But what does this "all Scripture" comprise? The Old Testament Scriptures alone; for St. Paul congratulates St. Timothy on having known them from his infancy, which could only be true of these. The faith of Christ he had learned, not, certainly, from the New Testament Scriptures, which, at the time of his conversion were in all probability none of them yet written, but from the teaching of the Apostle St. Paul. "Continue, then," St. Paul says to him, "in the things which thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;" and he goes on to say, and that "from thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation by the faith which is in Christ Jesus." And then comes the passage in question, "All Scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." Surely the meaning of this is sufficiently clear: the Apostle rejoices in St. Timothy's knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures, as being able to instruct him to salvation, "through the faith which is in Christ Jesus;" that is, with the faith of

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Christ for his key, he could unlock the mysteries of those old Scriptures, more especially of prophecy, to which the attention of believers is so often called by the Apostles, and seeing their perfect fulfilment, become himself better and better instructed, and better able to instruct others. All, therefore, that this passage really proves is this, that there were certain inspired books which Christian bishops, such as St. Timothy, did well to study; but what those books were it gives us no clue for ascertaining, and, as we have seen, to the New Testament Scriptures it certainly does not apply at all.

And, after all, if the New Testament Scriptures bear witness to the inspiration of the Old, which of course they do in some measure, though by no means completely, yet (as we said before with respect to their genuineness) this avails us but little unless we can also find a witness for the inspiration of the New. There is no such claim on its own behalf expressed in its pages; and even if there were, a claim is not sufficient to establish its own truth. "If I bear witness of myself," said our blessed Lord, "my witness is nothing." The Koran, the book held sacred by the Mahomet-

ans, distinctly declares its own inspiration, much more distinctly than any one can pretend to say that the Bible does, inasmuch as it really purports to be an address from God to man, which the Bible does not. But you do not therefore take its own word for itself, and believe in its inspiration.

Again, others say that the Bible bears witness to its own inspiration from the superhuman wisdom and beauty of its contents. Now this is precisely what Mahometans say of the Koran; Mahomet himself did not pretend to work miracles, but appealed to the wisdom and beauty of the Koran as a sufficient proof of his divine mission, he being an unlettered man, and therefore, as he argued, incapable of producing such a work. "You ask for miracles," he used to say; "the Koran itself is a standing miracle."

That there is superhuman beauty and wisdom in the Bible is, of course, most true; but that it is so obvious as to create in ordinary minds, coming to the study of it altogether unprepared by any previous training, a certain conviction of its inspiration, is what we cannot believe. Surely, for the most part, we do not grow into a sense of its beauty until we have

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well studied it, and that with the temper of mind produced by the certain knowledge that it is the word of God. Most people, taking up the Bible for the first time, without any such preparation, would find at least as much to repel as to attract them; a great deal would strike them as very difficult to be believed; and a great deal too, without the traditional interpretation which even Protestants in this country have been taught from their childhood, would surely tend rather to scandal than to edification. Who, for instance, could possibly discover, from the sacred text alone, that the Song of Solomon has a mystical meaning, and is an inspired composition? And, in fact, it is generally found by missionaries that the Bible itself makes little impression on the heathen; for they often declare that they have much better books of their own. The truth is, that all such evidences as these serve to corroborate a belief already existing; but the belief itself, universal as it is among Christians, rests mainly, and in the first instance, on testimony—the testimony, as we have said, of the Catholic Church.

A written document of any importance requires, in the ordinary transactions of life, the

attestation of witnesses, and so also does Holy Scripture, which is, after all, but a written document. And this fact of its inspiration, being a fact at once so very important, and so altogether belonging to a supernatural order of things, requires a witness of a peculiar kind of authority. Indeed, our belief in the inspiration of Scripture, to be thoroughly and satisfactorily established, should rest on the testimony of an inspired witness, that witness again proving by miracles that such divine commission to teach and testify had been really given him. And just such witnesses we have in the Apostles of our Lord. We know that, in the old dispensation, inspired and wonder-working Prophets arose from time to time; and we are told by a Jewish historian, that by them was attested the inspiration of the sacred books of the Old Testament. This received a further seal from the testimony of the Apostles, and to the inspiration of the New Testament they are the sole witnesses. But how do we know that they bore such testimony? How do we know any thing about them? We were none of us living in their time, nor our fathers, nor our fathers' fathers, for many generations back. Who, then, is there, yet living among men,

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who heard them speak, and can bear witness to what they said? There is one such witness, and one only—the Catholic Church. She exists in our day, she existed in the days of our fathers, she existed in the days of the Apostles; and throughout she has retained, and still retains her identity—though ages have passed away, and successive generations of her children have sprung into being, lived, and disappeared, like the leaves of the forest.

It is on her testimony that we ground our belief in the inspiration of Scripture; and that too with unhesitating certainty, because we look upon her not as a mere human witness, nor as the mouthpiece of a human tradition, but as a witness who can neither deceive nor be deceived: a witness, not inspired indeed as were the Apostles, for she has not, like them, a new revelation to promulgate, but infallible, that is, divinely guarded from all possibility of error in whatever regards faith or morals; such she claims to be, and we believe her claim, because her very existence through so many centuries, and under so much opposition, her catholicity, her unity, her changelessness from age to age, where every thing is changing around her, the supernatural holiness of

so many of her children, and her abiding gift of miracles, are to us sufficient grounds of belief. Protestants admit none of these; yet in this most important point, (to them *all-important*,) the inspiration of Scripture, they trust her testimony as unhesitatingly as we do ourselves.

Again, another point on which (at least as far as the New Testament is concerned) they receive her decision without question is, that of what is called the Canon of Scripture, that is, what books are to be accounted as really inspired, and what not. Protestants generally have a kind of superstitious notion about the Bible, as if it were something essentially one and indivisible, and as if to doubt the genuineness or inspiration of a single line were to doubt that of the whole. This last belief indeed is true now, because all contained in the Bible has now received the seal of the Church's testimony; and therefore *now* to doubt any, would be to doubt the authority which stamps authenticity on all. But it was far otherwise at the beginning. There are two facts which ought to be known to Protestants, that they may better understand the value of the Church's testimony in this matter: in the first place,

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that there were very many writings, believed by many to be inspired, current among the Christians of the first ages, which the Church has since rejected, in which rejection Protestants have acquiesced so entirely, as in all probability to be ignorant of the very name and pretensions of these writings; and, in the second place, that of the books which they now believe to be the Scripture so unhesitatingly, that to question them would seem like blasphemy, several were long doubted about in early times, though at last received by the Church as genuine Scripture. There were no less than twenty-one gospels current among the faithful; there was an epistle of St. Barnabas, which exists at the present day; there was also an epistle of St. Clement, bishop of Rome, the third in succession from St. Peter, but also a cotemporary of his, (Philip. iv. 3,) for the sword of the persecutor made succession very rapid in those days; this too has come down to us; and a work, called the "Shepherd," by St. Hermas, who was also one of St. Paul's friends, (Rom. xvi. 14.) These were used to be read in many churches in early times; but afterwards, on careful inquiry and investigation, were rejected by the Church.

from the canon of inspired Scripture. On the other hand, St. Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, the two epistles of St. Peter, the epistle of St. James, that of St. Jude, the two last of St. John, and the Book of the Apocalypse, also single chapters, or portions of chapters, in three out of the four Gospels, were long much doubted about and questioned, though at last received. And all this was done, the one were received and the others rejected, only by an authoritative decision of the Church; that is, by the decision of councils, as they are called, or assemblies of bishops, who, on examining the subject, used indeed all the means which the most enlightened human wisdom could suggest as likely to bring them to a right conclusion, yet at the same time mainly relied on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, whom Christ Himself had promised should lead them into all truth. And this decision, so made, has never since been questioned, as far at least as the New Testament is concerned, but is adhered to by Protestants quite as unhesitatingly as by Catholics.

With respect to the Old-Testament Scriptures, there are certain books which have been decided by the Church in the same way to be

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Inspired Scripture, and which were accordingly received as such for more than twelve centuries by all Christians, without exception, but which Protestants now reject on the authority of the Jews, who do not admit the said books to be inspired. Their history is briefly this: The Old Testament books were for the first time collected and gathered into a volume, as is generally believed, by Esdras or Ezra, who lived at the time of the Babylonish captivity. These writings, as we know, had been composed at long intervals of time, and their inspiration attested by a succession of inspired, and, for the most part, wonder-working prophets. But after the time of Esdras, other books were written, and others again discovered which had been written before; all these are what Protestants call the Apocryphal Books; and at the time of our Lord's coming upon earth, the Jews were divided in opinion as to the fact of their inspiration, there never having been any authoritative decision of the whole Jewish Church upon the subject. Josephus, the Jewish historian, gives as a reason for not accounting them inspired, that since the Babylonish captivity there had been no certain succession of prophets to attest them. But our Blessed

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Lord is to us a prophet, and more than a prophet; He must have known whether or not these books were inspired, and He is not likely to have withheld such knowledge from His Apostles, nor they, again, from their disciples; and, therefore, when, after much question and discussion, and careful sifting of the belief of the apostolical churches, the collective voice of the Church decided that they were to be received as Scripture, one does not see why even Protestants, receiving as they do, without question or hesitation, the whole of the New Testament solely on this very same testimony of the Catholic Church, should yet totally and contemptuously reject that testimony as regards the Old Testament, preferring to it the authority of those Jews who are the descendants of the crucifiers of our Lord, and who, having rejected Him, are themselves rejected of God, and no longer His chosen people, nor under the guidance of His Spirit. The Church of England in her 6th article declares, that "by Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority there never was any doubt in the Church;" but, as we have seen, if she really carried out this principle, she would re-

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ject the epistle to the Hebrews, the two epistles of St. Peter, the epistles of St. James and St. Jude, the two last of St. John, and the Book of the Apocalypse, which she nevertheless receives without hesitation as inspired Scripture.

But the wonder, after all, is rather that Protestants accept these books than that they reject the others; for why, believing of the Church as they do, they accept her testimony at all on a matter so all-important, it is hard to say. And, in truth, this inconsistency of admitting the authority of the Church on this point, and rejecting it on every other, is keenly felt by Protestants in other countries, more especially in Germany, where the people are more given to reasoning than we are; and they accordingly reject it here also, and set themselves to the examination of Scripture as freely and fearlessly as they would to that of any other books, till they have ended, too many of them at least, in doubting the genuineness of one portion, criticising the history, or chronology, or morality of another, and totally disbelieving the inspiration of the whole. Some bold and active minds in this country are unhappily following their example —most unhappily, but as Protestants, certainly

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not unreasonably: the unreasonableness is rather with those who act otherwise. The truth is, that Protestantism, as it ordinarily exists in this country, is a mere tissue of inconsistencies, and holds a position that cannot be explained by any rules of common sense. Why, believing no more, it believes so much; or why, believing so much, it believes no more, is a complete puzzle. Protestantism in England is like a great tree torn up by the roots from the rock out of which it grew, and leaning head foremost over a chasm, yet stayed in its fall either by some of its fibres still clinging to the soil, or by some other interposing force; while Protestantism in most other countries, more especially in Germany, is like the same tree fallen utterly and lying prostrate in the abyss; or in other words, Protestantism elsewhere is, for the most part, simple disbelief; here, by a happy inconsistency, it retains a disjointed and fragmentary Christianity. But this cannot long continue: the tree may tremble for a while over the chasm, but the first storm will hurl it down. Minds are now fast awaking to reason, and inquire concerning religion; and when this is the case, an inconsistent system cannot long endure; and this

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very belief in Scripture, which, as we have said, has been long thrown aside, at least among the more intellectual in Protestant Germany, will, it is to be feared, not long abide in Protestant England; for in truth it has no reasonable basis except trust in the testimony of the Church; and it is not reasonable to trust that testimony with such implicit faith in this one particular, and on every other to reject it with scorn and hatred, as though it were the very voice of the deceiver.

Better, however, by far is inconsistent belief than consistent unbelief; and this very inconsistency of our Protestant countrymen may be traced to their instinctive conviction of a great truth, which, if brought to light and consciously recognized, might go far towards leading them back to the Church. It is this, that, if Christianity be true, there must be somewhere an infallible teacher to explain to us what it is; and for this reason: Christianity demands *belief* as a condition of our eternal salvation, which could not be if there were no means of ascertaining what it is that we are expected to believe. Protestants have thrown aside the Church, which, for fifteen centuries, had been acknowledged as that infallible teacher; but

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still they have not thrown aside the deep inward conviction that such a teacher there must be; and as there is no body of men, no living authority, except the one they have rejected, which has any imaginable claim to be such, they naturally enough seize on the written word without inquiring very carefully whether from its structure it appears to have been intended by God to stand in the stead of a living teacher, whether from the result it appears that it actually does teach with certainty, or, which alone is to our present purpose, what reasons they have for believing in its inspiration. In fact, the real ground on which they receive it is this: an infallible teacher there must be somewhere; and if this be not such, there is none: this last assertion being a begging of the very question at issue between them and the Catholic Church. All we would urge upon them, then, at present is, to hold fast this belief in the inspiration of Scripture; but at the same time to remember on whose sole testimony it is that they have real solid ground for that belief; and therefore to ask themselves whether, as in this she gives what they all feel and know to be true testimony, they ought not in candor to give her a patient hearing when she goes on.

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to explain what is the true office of this Holy Scripture for whose inspiration she vouches, and her own with regard to it; and also, what is the true meaning of those sacred oracles to which Protestants themselves, if they be at all earnest-minded, must feel they need some key, as no two sects, scarcely any two individuals, understand them alike. This last subject, however, must be entered into more fully on another occasion, when we shall consider the Church as the Interpreter of Scripture.

■

THE CHURCH
THE
INTERPRETER OF SCRIPTURE;

OR,

HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT THE
BIBLE MEANS ?



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HOW DO WE KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS?

WE have seen that the Catholic Church has been in every age the guardian of holy Scripture, and is still the witness, and the only competent witness, to its inspiration and its genuineness. We may well ask, then, how it is that in the teeth of two such facts as these, there should yet be such an outcry against the Catholic Church as the enemy of that very Scripture. A little reflection, however, will enable us to trace its origin. Calumny is, as we know, like an inverted pyramid, requiring but a point to stand upon ; and, in the present instance, we can easily see what that point is ; for though the facts we have mentioned are more than sufficient to prove the falsehood of the charge against the Catholic Church, yet there are other facts, and those nearer the sur-

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face, and more obvious to mere passers-by, which tend to give it plausibility.

The conduct of the Catholics with regard to holy Scripture is undeniably and professedly different from that of Protestants. Protestants, all such at least as in any degree pretend to piety, have, as a matter of course, a Bible on their book-shelves, and make more or less a point of reading it; and all, whether pious or not, and whether they read the Bible or not, fully admit it to be their duty to read it; whereas thousands of Catholics live very piously and die very happily, without ever having had a Bible in their possession; and so far from its being considered every one's duty to read it, in some persons, and under certain circumstances, such a study has been discouraged, and even prohibited.

This difference of conduct is quite enough to account for the popular outcry, inasmuch as it is plain to all that it is not accidental, but resting on a real difference of principle; and that Protestants should have construed that difference in the way most to flatter themselves, and to condemn us, whom they have been sworn in, as it were, to hate from their very cradles, is perhaps no more than was to be expected. At

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any rate, such is the case. Protestants read the Bible; Catholics do not: and why? "We need not go far for a reason," say the Protestants; "the Protestant religion is in the Bible, the Catholic is not; therefore Protestants are urged to read the Bible to confirm them in the truth of Protestantism, while Catholics are forbidden to read it, lest they should discover the falsehood of Catholicism." This theory certainly accounts for the facts in question, and in the way most satisfactory to those who have framed it; it overlooks, it is true, the strange improbability that the Church should watch over a certain volume from age to age with jealous care, loudly proclaiming to the world that that volume is the inspired word of God, and yet all the while consciously persist in teaching a doctrine contradicted by that inspired word: but greater difficulties than these are swallowed every day by determined prejudice; and it is usually of as little avail to point them out, as it was for the lamb in the fable to ask how she could possibly have muddied the stream for the wolf, who was at that very time drinking nearer the fountain-head.

Some, however, there may be who really wish to be candid and to see the truth; and to such

it may be worth while to explain, once for all, that if Catholics do not read the Bible in the same way as Protestants do, it is not, as Protestants assert, because the teaching of their Church is such as to dread being confronted face to face with Scripture, nor because they less fully believe than any Protestant can do in the inspiration of Scripture; but simply because they do not believe in their own individual inspiration as interpreters of Scripture. Scripture they well know can make no mistake; but they are in no way sure that they themselves can make no mistake as to what Scripture means. They believe that there is one authorized interpreter of Scripture, and one alone,—the Holy Catholic Church, which is divinely guarded from all possibility of error, being informed by the same Holy Spirit by whom Scripture was inspired, and therefore alone able to penetrate its real meaning. Her interpretation of it he trusts with unhesitating certainty; while to trust any crude theories he might himself be tempted to form respecting it, would seem to him simply ridiculous. Thus he never dreams of reading holy Scripture with the view of gathering from it the articles of his belief; indeed, to do so would be to cease at

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once from being a Catholic in heart; and any one reading Scripture in this spirit, or in danger of doing so, would certainly be forbidden to read it at all, if he desired to continue in the communion of the faithful; for he would be virtually denying that the Church is the sole infallible interpreter of Scripture, whereas the acknowledgment of her as such is the very fundamental principle of Catholicism. Catholics, then, do not study Scripture to learn their faith, but to grow in holiness; and for this purpose selections from Scripture, or meditations, and devotional works on Scriptural subjects (in which Catholicism is rich beyond what Protestants can imagine), are found to be more useful, and also to give more insight into the real spirit and meaning of Scripture itself, than the unaided study of the entire Bible. It is surely, then, nothing very wonderful that the Bible, as a whole, should be found less frequently in the hands of Catholics than in those of Protestants, whose principle in this matter is altogether opposite. While Catholics acknowledge but one authoritative interpreter, Protestants hold that every man is his own interpreter; that from "the Bible and the Bible only" every man is bound to learn all that he must believe in order

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to be saved; that if he prays for the help of God's Holy Spirit, this alone, without human aid, will guard him from all material error; that no church, no body of men, no teacher whatever has any Divine authority to interpret Scripture for him; he must do it for himself, and he can. If, then, Protestants must gather for themselves from the bare text of the Bible, the knowledge of those truths which they must believe if they wish to be saved, what can they do, what *must* they do, but pore and ponder over that text from day to day, and from year to year, so long as life endures? To do this is but to be consistent; but they should not find fault with Catholics for being consistent also; both parties act in this particular as they *must* act on their respective principles. The only question is, Which principle is the true one? or, in other words, What seems to have been in this matter the will of Almighty God, by whom the Scriptures were given, and to whom alone it belongs to determine their use? Was it His design that each individual should gather his faith out of Scripture for himself, or, with an inspired Scripture, has He provided also an infallible interpreter.

Before considering this question, however,

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we must just remark, that nothing can be more unjust than the way in which it is usually stated by Protestants, as though the parties opposed to each other were the Bible and the Church. "I hold by my Bible," they say, "and you hold by your Church;" thus representing the Church and the Bible as two hostile fortresses, as it were, flanking the battle-field on either side, to which the contending parties respectively betake themselves. It is no such thing: the real question lies between the Church and the individual, *the Bible being the subject-matter common to both*; and the point at issue, *Who is to interpret the Bible?* which the Catholic believes to be the Church, and the Protestant himself; so that "the Church" and "himself" are the parties opposed, not the Church and the Bible. That the Bible is the inspired word of God, Protestants and Catholics are perfectly agreed in believing. It is true, Catholics do not hold, as Protestants profess to do, that nothing can possibly be matter of divine revelation which is not contained in holy Scripture, nor do Protestants themselves in fact, though they do in words; for they believe the inspiration of holy Scripture to be matter of Divine revelation, yet this, from the very nature of the

case, cannot rest on the testimony of Scripture itself. So, too, with the duty of baptizing infants, and of observing Sunday instead of Saturday as the Christian holiday, on which points Protestants believe and act as Catholics do, while yet they would be puzzled to find Scripture warrant for so doing. However, be this as it may, in all that concerns our present purpose, Catholics and Protestants are fully agreed respecting holy Scripture; that is, they both hold alike that Scripture is inspired, and that therefore nothing which contradicts Scripture can be true; and the question at issue between them is, who is to determine what is or is not in accordance with Scripture; or, in other words, what was the design of Almighty God—that each individual should interpret Scripture for himself, or that the Church should interpret it for him?

And here it occurs to us at once, that if men are to interpret Scripture, they must have it to read, and they must be able to read it; for, if they are obliged to receive the bare letter second-hand from the lips of another, they cannot give it such close, and patient, and independent study, as to enable them to draw from it a system of doctrine. How fared it then in this

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matter with all Christendom for fourteen hundred years after our Lord's coming ? for during the whole of that time, as printing was not yet invented, and so books could only be multiplied by the laborious process of transcribing, they must of necessity have been very scarce ; and a book, therefore, of the size of the Bible was the treasure of a church, or monastery, or noble house. That every individual should possess a copy of it, so as to be able to study it in private, was out of the question even among the rich ; and as to the poor, what was to become of *them* ? Yet "to the poor," we are told, "the Gospel was preached." Does it seem likely, then, that our blessed Lord, who, being God, foresaw all things, should have left the mass of His people for fourteen centuries without the means of learning their faith ? Yet so it was, if the Protestant principle be true.

And even now that Bibles are so plentiful, can every one read them ? And of those who can read them, are all capable of understanding even their simple grammatical sense ? Surely, we hear every day of the most absurd misapprehensions, ludicrous if their subject were not so grave, arising from a want of knowledge of our written language, which differs considera-

bly from the spoken language in ordinary use among the less educated classes ; and this difficulty is increased by the fact of the Protestant translation having been made between two or three centuries ago, so that its phraseology, beautiful as it is, is sometimes rather obsolete. How are the uneducated, then, according to the Protestant principle, to attain the knowledge of the faith ? It is obviously a mere mockery to tell them to learn it from their own interpretation of Scripture. Yet they are a large body, and very precious in the sight of God—the poor of Christ : can that be the true means of learning the faith, which cannot, by any possibility, be used by them ? And if they, though not others, are to seek for teachers, where are they to seek ? What authority to teach them can one man, or body of men, claim rather than another, if there is indeed no authorized teacher bearing a Divine commission to interpret the Word of God ?

However, leaving all thought of the poor, let us consider whether the meaning of holy Scripture is so clear and so near the surface, that the common run even of educated people can be sure that they understand it aright. And here we must remember what Protestants seem con-

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tinually to forget, namely, that holy Scripture, like any other book, can have but one true meaning; that, namely, which its author intended. I do not mean that there may not be a primary and secondary meaning, or a literal and a figurative meaning to the same passage; but I mean, that the Bible is the record of God's revelation to man, and that revelation consists of a certain definite system of doctrine, and one only; and obviously two interpretations of Scripture which contradict each other cannot both be true. Now the question is this: Is there any one definite system set forth in holy Scripture so distinctly that any one can discern it for himself? Is the structure of Scripture such as to give one the idea that it was meant to supersede all necessity of exposition, and to stamp its real meaning on the mind of its readers, as a seal gives at once its impression to the wax? It would be difficult to imagine any book whatever, certainly any book grasping so wide a subject, and one involving such a complication of details, so written as to anticipate and answer all questions which it might suggest. Even a catechism or a creed would convey very little meaning to most minds, and might even convey a meaning other than it

was designed to convey to some, without the voice of a living teacher to explain it. How should we fare, if each individual had to study the books of the law of our country, whatever they may be, for himself, to learn how to live as a quiet citizen; or to study medical books to keep himself in health? Yet no doubt there are books on these subjects, written in a far more distinct and scientific form than the books of holy Scripture. In fact, when we look into the structure of holy Scripture, we find just what we should expect on the Catholic theory, but just what we should not expect on the Protestant; what we should expect, if we are furnished from without with a key to its interpretation; but what we should not expect, if we are to interpret it for ourselves. We do not find doctrines set forth in formulas, nor in any thing whatever of a systematic form, but scattered up and down, here and there, in the midst of other matter, incidentally, as it were, without any apparent system at all. Even the epistles, the most directly doctrinal part of the New Testament, so far from being written with a view of teaching the faith, are professedly addressed to those who had already learnt it; and this or that doctrine appears to be dwelt upon

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in them, not so much with reference to its intrinsic importance, and prominence in the Christian scheme, as to accidental circumstances which made it necessary to be enforced on that particular occasion. Even if it could be shown that each separate truth of Christianity appears manifestly on the surface of Scripture, no one can pretend that their connection and relative proportions, the perspective, so to speak, in which they must be viewed, can be readily discerned without any collateral light, from the mere study of the sacred text, far less from such study as is in the power of ordinary individuals.

But we may go further, and say, that the separate doctrines of Christianity are by no means so clearly expressed that the language which conveys them must of necessity bear that meaning, and no other. If there are texts in Scripture, for instance, the sense of which appears so manifest that one would have thought all mankind must agree in their interpretation, they are those which refer to the Real Presence of our Lord in the Blessed Eucharist: "This is my Body; this is my Blood." Can language be clearer? Coupled too with the sixth chapter of St. John's Gospel, in which our Lord de-

clares that He will give His flesh to eat, and with the various notices in the epistles, it seems to defy contradiction. But are all agreed that the words convey what they seem to convey? By no means: Protestants say that they are figurative; that as our Lord had before said, "I am the true Vine," and "I am the Door" of the sheep-fold, neither of which sayings are to be understood in their literal sense, so this saying also is not literal but figurative. And if this text does not convey an unquestionable meaning, of what text can we say that it does? Is there any single text on any doctrinal point which so explains itself as to suggest no question? and these questions who is to answer? There can be, as we have said, but one true answer of the many that may be given; and how are individual minds to be sure that they have hit on the true answer? It has been well said, that "when it is declared that the Word became flesh, three wide questions open upon us at the very announcement: What is meant by the 'Word,' what by 'flesh,' what by 'became?'" *these being, we must observe, not idle or irrelevant questions, but such as are absolutely necessary to understand the passage at all.* And individuals, in different ages, have attempted to answer

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these questions for themselves, and each of the three has given rise in turn to more than one false opinion, which in its day carried many along with it, but after a time died away, as heresies do, and left no trace behind it; for the Church, the one interpreter, calmly arose and spoke the true meaning of the sacred oracle, which bore with it the certain conviction that that truth alone engenders, and stamped itself on the mind of Christendom, so that the false theories melted away before it, and if they are remembered at all by any in the present day, Catholics or Protestants, are remembered only as worn-out absurdities. Yet the words in question *might* have borne the meaning the heretics gave them, as well apparently as that which now universally prevails. Does it seem probable, then, that if Almighty God had designed that every man should learn his faith from his own interpretation of Scripture, He would have allowed that faith to be recorded there in language so open to misapprehension?

It is often said, indeed, that though detached passages may be dark, yet that sufficient light is thrown upon them to bring out the truth, if you compare them with other passages. But does not this cut both ways? Some passages,

it is true, throw light on one another; but are there none which, though plain enough by themselves, become difficult precisely because there are other passages which seem to contradict them, and with which it is hard to reconcile them? Surely the adjusting of seeming discrepancies is one of the great difficulties of Scripture interpretation; a difficulty which those who despise it can hardly have grappled with in earnest.

But here Protestants will answer, that all things are possible with God; that to the natural powers of man the interpretation of Scripture is indeed difficult, or rather impossible; but that with the assistance of His Holy Spirit, it is possible, nay easy, and that that Spirit is never withheld from those who ask it. This, then, is a question of fact; God, of course, *might* do this; He who inspired Scripture, *could*, if He so willed it, inspire each reader of Scripture, so that all minds, knit into mystic unison, should give back the same sound. He *might* work this standing miracle; but *has* He done so? Truth, as we have said, can be but one; there is but one revelation, and therefore but one true interpretation of that volume which is its record; if, therefore, the Spirit of

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God leads Protestants into truth, it must necessarily lead them into agreement. But is it so? On the contrary, it is too notorious to need stating, that Protestantism is split up into sects + almost innumerable, each sect based on its own particular interpretation of the Bible, and each, in some point or other, contradicting all the rest. . . “The Bible,” it has been well said, “is an instrument on which every man may play his own tune;” Protestants have done so, and what a crash of jarring discords is the result! The Presbyterian reads one system in Scripture, the Quaker another, the Church of England another (or rather two others, for two systems, distinctly antagonistic, co-exist within her pale), and the Unitarian something quite different from either. All these sects profess alike to have derived their religion from the Bible; but clearly the same Holy Spirit cannot have guided them all in its interpretation. It cannot surely be the same Spirit which teaches the Calvinist that human nature is totally corrupt, and the Unitarian that it is not corrupt at all; which leads the Church-of-England man to believe in “two sacraments as generally necessary to salvation,” and the Quaker to reject sacraments altogether; the same Spirit cannot teach some

that our Lord Jesus Christ is God, and others that He is mere man : yet who of all these shall dare to say of the rest that they have not prayed for the help of that Holy Spirit ; and if they have prayed and not received, what becomes of the Protestant theory ?

It is sometimes attempted to escape from this difficulty by saying, that the points on which Protestants differ from one another are points of secondary importance, and that on such there is no promise of supernatural guidance ; but that with regard to doctrines, the belief of which is essential to salvation, the Spirit of God is given to those who ask it, so as to guard them from error. But who is to determine what points are essential and what are not ? and on what points do not Protestants disagree ? Is it necessary to everlasting salvation that we believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ ? Is it necessary to believe in the Holy Trinity, in Original Sin, in the Atonement ? Is it necessary to receive holy baptism, and to have " faith in the promises of God made to us in that sacrament ? " On no one of these points are all Protestants agreed ; yet no one surely can call any of them unimportant.

It is quite clear, then, that Protestants, as a

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body, are not led, as they pretend, by the Spirit of God in their interpretation of Scripture ; and such being the case, it is perhaps rather to be wondered at, that enough of them can be found to agree in any one view for them to run into sects at all, instead of each of them going his separate way. But the fact is, the cry of the Bible and the Bible only is a mere cry, a mere thing of words, which, as far as the mass of mankind is concerned, it is utterly out of the question to reduce to practice. I don't believe that there is any single Protestant in this country who can pretend to say that he gathered his system of belief, whatever it may be, exclusively from the Bible, without the help of any human teaching. All those who in their childhood ever learnt a catechism or a creed,—and who has not?—have no right to join in this cry, for they have not acted on the principle of the Bible and the Bible only, any more than the Catholic whom they rail against. If that principle means any thing, it means that the mind is to be brought to the study of the Bible altogether unbiased; and if so, of course altogether uninstructed. Is this the case in this country? No one can pretend that it is. Of those classes who read the Bible at all, every in-

dividual comes to the study of it with his mind steeped in tradition of some kind or other, Protestants quite as much as Catholics. Nay more, it is by means of this tradition alone that they are able to understand the Bible at all : it is the clew without which Scripture would be to them an inextricable labyrinth. The mind of each individual is formed on that of his sect, and that of each sect is cast in some particular mould bearing the stamp of its founder, or of the leading idea which gave it birth ; and Scripture, poured, as it were, into the mind thus prepared, readily takes its form, and men imagine they find in Scripture what they bring to it. The truth is, therefore, that when a man throws off the Pope, it is only to choose another Pope for himself ; for there are few even among Protestants of such marvellous hardihood and self-dependence as to stand up perpendicularly as their own Pope. The only difference is, that instead of abiding by an interpreter who pledges himself not to mislead them, and pleads a divine commission resting on evidence open to the examination of the whole world, they choose to themselves interpreters who do not even pretend to a divine commission, who in no way promise not to mislead them, and whose autho-

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rity rests on they know not what, yet who lay down the law, and dogmatize and anathematize those who differ from them as positively as though they had been pronounced infallible by a voice from heaven. If those who blindly attach themselves to these chance leaders would but for a moment, without prejudging the cause, compare their claims to attention with those of the Catholic Church, even regarding her solely in her human aspect, they could not but feel the unreasonableness of their position. What is the Catholic Church, looked upon merely as a human authority ? She is the collective mind of a countless multitude of men of every conceivable variety of nation and character, yet gathered up, as far as religion is concerned, into perfect unity ; of generation upon generation, traceable in unbroken identity back to the very age when the New Testament Scriptures were written, nay to the age when they were not yet in existence. In her, if anywhere, must of necessity be deposited the traditionary records of the oral teaching of those by whom those same Scriptures were written ; she must know, if any can know, what the Apostles taught, and how the faithful understood their teaching ; while commentary after commentary

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on this or that portion of Holy Writ, the result of the life-long meditation of saints and martyrs and learned doctors, lie treasured up in her keeping; the fruit of the accumulated genius of devout men from every nation under heaven, and during a course of six times as many centuries as Protestantism has yet existed. Every question too as to the interpretation of Scripture which has yet arisen among men, has been sifted by her to the very bottom, and the light of the whole mind of Christendom, of every local tradition, and of every kind of evidence brought to bear upon it.

And in truth it is upon the Church's interpretation of holy Scripture, *not upon their own*, that even most Protestants in this country have unconsciously moulded their own religious system, so far as it bears on what they themselves consider to be the leading doctrines of Christianity; those, for instance, of the Trinity and Incarnation, of Original Sin, and the Atonement. Did they learn these great truths from the Bible only? Alas! some who study the Bible quite as intently as themselves have failed to find them there; and any honest person, really examining his own mind, could not but confess that, although coming to the study of

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the Bible with a mind instructed beforehand in these doctrines, he finds enough there to corroborate his belief in them, he would yet, without such previous instruction, be very much puzzled to gather his knowledge of them from thence in any thing like the definiteness of detail in which he at present holds them. The fact is, these doctrines formed a portion of the great Catholic system which prevailed throughout Christendom at the period of the so-called Reformation ; and it happened that those who conducted the change in England left them unassailed, so that they continued in the minds of the majority of the nation a fragment of the ancient faith. With the greater number of the Protestants abroad we know it is far otherwise; they have more nearly acted out the principle of "the Bible and the Bible only," and more boldly trampled Catholic tradition under foot, according to the well-known epigram, "All Rome lies low: Luther destroyed her roof, Calvin her walls, and Socinus her foundations;" and what has been the result? Those who uprooted the foundations of Catholicism uprooted at the same time what most Protestants in England still consider to be the foundations of Christianity.

Surely, then, it would be but honest if English Protestants would once ask themselves, whether, as they cannot doubt but that the Church's interpretation of Scripture on these points is the true one, and all others, however plausible, utterly false, it may not be true likewise on other points, on which they so prejudge her as to refuse even to give her a hearing. They have found broken threads of her clew useful in guiding them through dark recesses where others have lost their way; why not try it further? Oh, if they would but seize that clew once again, if only for a moment, as an experiment, they would find it lead them smoothly and easily through mazes and tangled paths, where they have been often perplexed: they would soon discover that they now for the first time really understand the Bible; not what it *may* mean, but what it *does* mean; not only what this and that chapter, or this and that epistle, means, taken alone, but what it means as a whole. They would then discover what Catholics know and feel, that the Catholic Church alone is able to look the whole Scripture in the face; not passing over this, and explaining away that; not bringing some texts into exaggerated prominence, while others are

thrown quite into the background, which is what all Protestants do without exception, but fearlessly leaving the whole Scripture as it stands, in its native, untouched majesty, yet pouring upon it a full stream of light, which draws out into life and beauty its minutest shades of meaning. Persons who have been reared in other systems, and have been brought into the Catholic Church in mature age, are peculiarly sensible of this; nay, some have become Catholics simply on the evidence of the clear light thrown on Scripture by Catholic teaching,—a light which they had sought in vain from other sources. It was like adjusting the glasses of a telescope, and finding at last the right focus: when once found, there could be no mistake about it. The beautiful landscape, seen at length in all its clearness of outline and brilliancy of coloring, was a sufficient witness.

That same clew, if Protestants would but follow it patiently for a little space, would also enable them to understand, what is to them the cause of endless perplexity, the positions which the Church and the Bible respectively occupy in the apprehension of the Catholic. To the Catholic, their claims, so far from being antagonistic, mutually explain and corroborate, nay,

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seem almost necessarily to imply each other. Thus the Bible contains the science we have to learn, the Church is our living teacher of that science; the Bible is our law, the Church expounds and administers it; the Bible is our chart, the Church is our pilot; the Church bears witness to the inspiration of the Bible, the Bible to the divine commission of the Church; all that the Bible teaches, the Church believes; all that the Church teaches is in accordance with the Bible; the Bible contains nothing which contradicts the Church; the Church teaches nothing which contradicts the Bible: in a word, the Church comes forth into the world as God's ambassador, in all the stateliness and majesty which befits an envoy from the courts of heaven, and she bears in her hand the Bible as the document written and signed by Him who sent her forth, and containing both her credentials and the substance of her message.

One word more, and we have done. All Protestants, as we have remarked on a former occasion,* have a deep inward conviction that there must be some means of arriving with certainty at the real meaning of Scripture. They

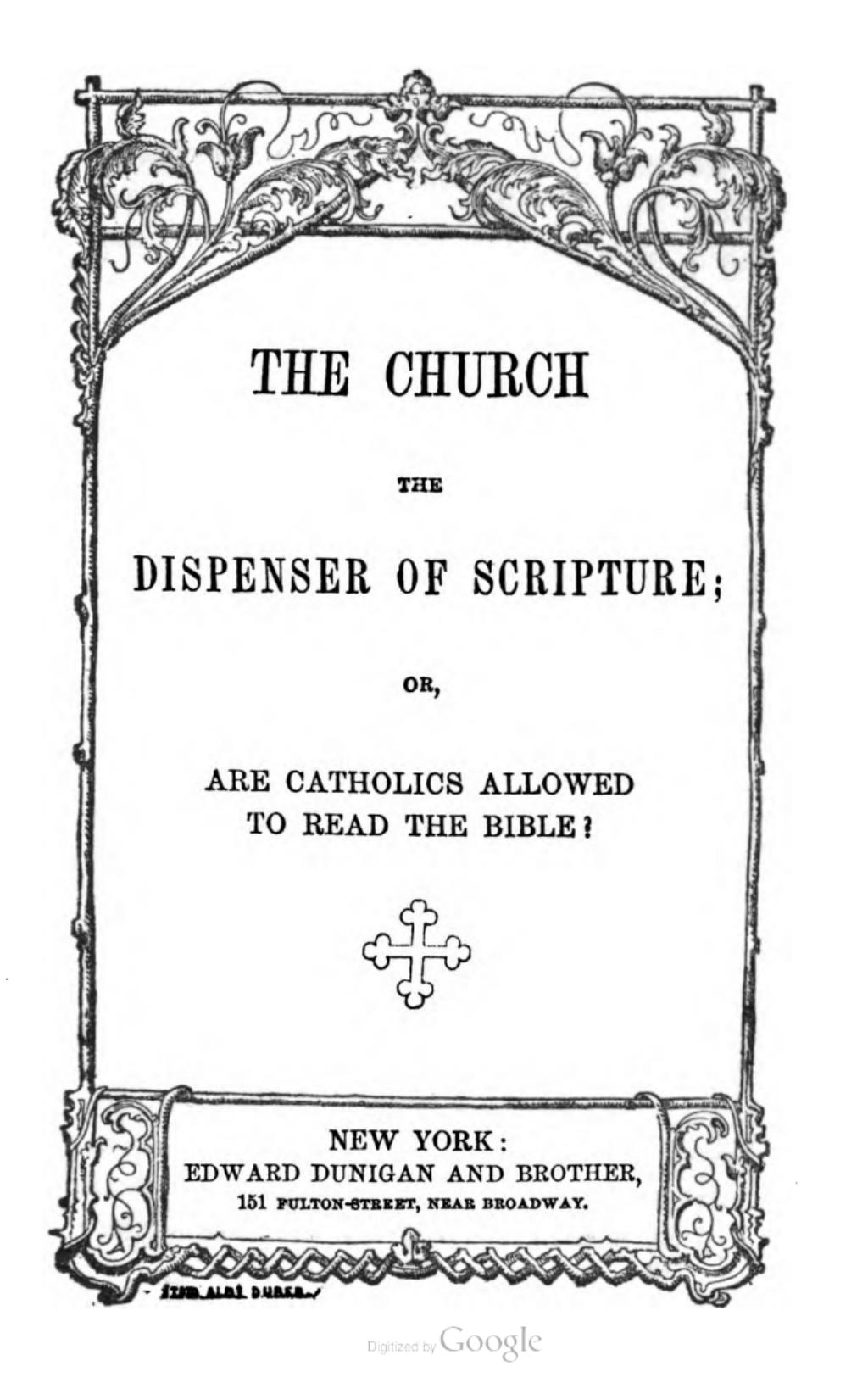
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WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS?

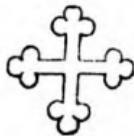
know that the Gospel requires faith as the indispensable condition of salvation, and that to have faith a man must know what he has to believe; and they rightly conclude that Almighty God would not have imposed an obligation on His creatures without having given them the means of fulfilling it. It is this true instinct trying to work itself out through a false theory, which makes them so pertinacious in maintaining their own principle, that every man can interpret Scripture for himself, in the very teeth of the known fact that, under ordinary circumstances, no man does, and of the secret acknowledgment which every man of ordinary modesty must make in his own mind, that he himself at least cannot, to say nothing of the multitude of contradictory interpretations which jostle one another at every turn; still, in spite of all this, the Protestant not only maintains his principle, but takes it for granted, and is so thoroughly in earnest about it, that to dispute it sounds to him like blasphemy; and naturally enough, for to him, to deny that any man can learn the faith from the Bible, is to deny that he can learn it at all; and so strong is his belief that an infallible interpreter there must be, that he will swear to manifest contradictions

rather than relinquish it. Now the Catholic Church, and she alone, professes to be this infallible interpreter, of whom the secret yearnings of every individual so emphatically testify the need. Is it fair, then, is it reasonable, considering that there is really no rival claimant whose pretensions can stand the most superficial inquiry, to dismiss her claims absolutely without a hearing? Surely, to do so is to be like a madman who, dying of thirst, should eagerly dig for water in the dry sands, and turn away at the same time from a pure and ample stream flowing at his very feet.

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THE CHURCH
THE
DISPENSER OF SCRIPTURE;
OR,
ARE CATHOLICS ALLOWED
TO READ THE BIBLE?



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THE CHURCH THE DISPENSER OF SCRIPTURE:

OR,

ARE CATHOLICS ALLOWED TO READ THE BIBLE ?

We are often asked, whether, after all, it is or is not true that the Catholic Church withholds the Scriptures from the people ; and that, sometimes, by the more candid Protestants, who are unwilling to think as badly of us as others do, but yet who, like all the rest, take it as a matter of course that, if this be true, there is nothing to be said for us ; the Catholic Church, in that case, standing at once self-convicted in their opinion, both of soul-destroying tyranny and of conscious imposture shrinking from detection.

There is scarcely a Protestant who would not judge thus ; but is it a fair judgment ? Supposing it to be proved that the Church has at any time withheld the Scriptures from the people, will this fact bear the weight of the

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heavy charges which have been grounded upon it? Does it, indeed, follow that she is guilty of soul-destroying tyranny? and if so, why? "Why?" answer our opponents, amazed at the question, "because holy Scripture is the one means appointed by Almighty God for conveying to man the knowledge of the Christian faith." Certainly, if this be so, the conclusion follows as a matter of course; we are all agreed that the knowledge of the Christian faith is necessary to salvation, and that, consequently, to withhold the only means of attaining such knowledge is to withhold the only means of salvation; which no one can designate otherwise than an act of soul-destroying tyranny, and that of a character simply diabolical. But is the proposition thus taken for granted, that holy Scripture is the one appointed means, really self-evident, or is it admitted by both parties as common ground? So far from it, it is one which we not only do not admit, but which we distinctly and strenuously deny; nay, it is the very point on which the whole controversy between us hinges. We believe that it was the purpose of Almighty God that we should learn our faith, not from a book, but from a living teacher, that teacher

being His Church. It is not, therefore, fair to speak as though the rulers of the Church, in withholding Scripture (if they do so withhold it), were withholding that which is admitted on all hands to be the one appointed means of learning the truth of God, and so were consciously guilty of "soul-destroying tyranny." I do not mean for a moment to assert that holding false principles is to be pleaded in justification of bad conduct; I only mean, that our principles ought in fairness to be proved false, not simply ignored, and those of our opponents proved true, not summarily taken for granted.

So also, to say that withholding Scripture argues conscious imposture, is to take for granted the infallibility of private judgment, which Catholics emphatically deny. If individual interpretations are necessarily correct, then to refuse to be tested by them is certainly a mark of conscious imposture; but surely not so, if they are liable to err. To shrink from having a piece of work measured by an uneven rule is no admission that the work itself is crooked, any more than declining to be judged by an incompetent tribunal is an acknowledgment of guilt.

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. Whether, then, it be true or not that the Church withholds the Scriptures from her children, we protest against these charges, because they are grounded on principles which we deny, and which, nevertheless, our adversaries take for granted instead of proving. Prove the principles, and then we will stand the consequences. As to the point itself, all that our space will allow us to attempt is, to make a brief and straightforward statement, first of the principles of the Church concerning it, and next of what her conduct has actually been; to enter into a defence, or even a minute explanation of either, would far exceed our present limits.

The Church's principle, then, is this, that, as she is the sole infallible interpreter of holy Scripture, so she is also its sole authorized dispenser, and that it is both her right and her bounden duty to give or to withhold it, as shall seem to her most conducive to the spiritual benefit of her children, of which she alone is the judge, being responsible for her judgment to none but to God only, from Whom she holds her office among men.

That this doctrine should be otherwise than startling and hateful to Protestants we cannot

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expect; and, as we have said, we have not now space to defend it. Thus much, however, is plain, that it is at least consistent with the rest of the Catholic system, which all reposes on one fundamental principle; namely, that the Church is the representative upon earth of our blessed Lord Himself, with authority and powers derived from Him, so that who obeys her obeys Him, and who despises her despises Him. And, in truth, all the various offices of the Church are so linked together, that the idea of one seems almost of necessity to involve that of the others. Thus, if she is the only infallible interpreter of Scripture, it almost follows as a necessary consequence, that she must also be its only authorized dispenser; for if a right faith is necessary to salvation, and if the Church alone has a certain knowledge of what that faith is, and of the real meaning of the documents in which it is (for the most part) contained; while individuals attempting to expound those documents for themselves are certain to fail—such failure, be it observed, periling that eternal salvation which it is the mission of the Church to secure to them—it seems but reasonable that she should have further authority to withhold those same documents from

such as are perverting them to a use contrary to that for which Almighty God committed them to her charge. And, after all, holy Scripture is but one gift among many; and, according to the Catholic system, the Church is the whole depository and dispenser of all God's supernatural gifts, inasmuch as she holds and dispenses the Sacraments, which are the main channels through which those gifts are conveyed. If, then, her children trust her freely and confidently in breaking to them the Bread of Life, it is surely but consistent and reasonable that they should trust her also as the dispenser to them of the pure "milk of the word."

Now this idea of dispenser involves in itself a twofold power; the power to bestow and the power to withhold. That the Church has pre-eminently exercised the first of these, the power of bestowing, with respect to holy Scripture, is a fact which, however ignored by such as will maintain a theory perforce and in the teeth of counter-evidence, no one who has ever fairly looked into the subject attempts to dispute.

How was it, for instance, that the Bible first found its way into the languages of Western Europe? If it had been the will of the Church to shut up the books of Scripture from the

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people, she had nothing to do but to leave them in the tongues in which they were originally written,—Hebrew, Chaldaic, Greek,—all alike unknown in the West, except to the learned few. But, instead of that, we find that from the times of the Apostles, translations were made, first of one book of Scripture, then of another, into Latin; so that, in the very earliest ages, there was at least one version, if not more, of the entire Bible in that language; which, be it remembered, was not then what it is now, merely the language of the learned and of the Church, but the spoken tongue of the whole Western world. To this, however, it may be answered, that no one doubts but that the Church in Apostolic times was willing to disseminate the Scriptures, for it had not yet become corrupt, and so had no reason to shrink from being tested by them. Well, then, let us go on to a later period in her history. Who has not heard of the Vulgate? Who does not know that it is a Latin translation of the entire Bible, stamped with the approbation of the Church in a manner so patent and so universally recognized, that the very name of the Vulgate is absolutely identified in the mind of the people of this country with the idea of

Popery? Now what is the history of the Vulgate? Was it made with the intention of locking up the Scriptures in a dead language? Consult any book of Church history, and you will find that it was brought into its present form in the fifth century, before the downfall of the Roman empire, and while Latin was still the spoken language of the West; that it was undertaken by order of the Pope, in consequence of complaints of inaccuracy in the existing version; and that the person to whom the execution of this great and laborious work (one, partly of revision and partly of fresh translation), was intrusted was St. Jerome (one of the clergy of Rome), a man profoundly versed in the Eastern languages, and distinguished for the classical elegance with which he wrote Latin, his native tongue; a man also of the most exalted sanctity and devotion. The whole history of this great undertaking is most interesting; but we have not space here to recount any of its details; and, indeed, sufficient to our present purpose is the fact, that the Vulgate was edited in the fifth century, under the auspices of the highest authority of the Church; and that its language (Latin) was at that time the spoken tongue of the whole

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Western empire. And if we go on to a period still later, we shall find the Church still laboring to increase among her children the knowledge of the written word. After the mighty power of Rome had bowed and fallen before the sweep of the Northern barbarians, her language too, in a short time, ceased to be the vernacular tongue of any nation, and became what is called a dead language—(though, in truth, it has ever lived in the sacred offices of the Church, and for ages was the medium of communication between the learned of all lands, as indeed, in some measure, it is still); while, from its gradual blending with the dialects of the conquering tribes, grew up new tongues, which, developing as time advanced, resulted at last in the copious and polished languages of modern Europe. These last were necessarily for some time rude and barbarous in their structure, too much so for written composition in them to be possible; but when once they became moulded into any thing like form, we find, in almost every instance, that the very first use made of them was for the translation of holy Scripture. “In the eighth and ninth centuries,” says a Protestant historian,* “when

* Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 474.

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the Vulgate had ceased to be generally intelligible, . . . translations were freely made into the vernacular languages." In our country, the Venerable Bede, a canonized Saint of the eighth century, translated various parts of Scripture into Anglo-Saxon, the language then spoken here; and before his time, as he himself tells us, the poet Cædmon, having received the gift of song miraculously in a vision, devoted himself during the remainder of his life to making poetical paraphrases of Scripture in his native tongue. Later than this, in the reign of Alfred, a translation was made of the whole New Testament; and he himself, it is said, at the time of his death, was engaged in translating the Psalms. In the tenth century, a complete translation was made of the Old Testament. In the eleventh century, as we know, this country was conquered by the Normans, which caused a complete revolution in the language; the old Anglo-Saxon being forcibly crushed down, and superseded among the higher classes of society by the Norman; but yet retaining sufficient life to become the basis of our present language, which resulted from its gradual amalgamation with the Norman. While the idiom of the country was in this

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unsettled state, it could not be expected that there should be much writing in it of any kind ; yet we find that even the first centuries after the conquest produced translations of many books of Scripture, but chiefly in verse, in which, indeed, the first efforts of an infant language are almost always made. Soon, however, there were translations in prose also ; and there are still existing copies of an English translation of the entire Bible, supposed to have been executed in the 13th century ; these were made chiefly by clergy, and always with the encouragement of Church authorities.

We have mentioned what took place in our own country, because more immediately interesting to ourselves ; but the same work was going on elsewhere with at least equal energy. In Germany and in France, in these same centuries, were various translations made both in prose and verse, of many of which there are manuscript copies still existing, whose date and history are well known. That such copies were multiplied by the incessant labor of the monks, many of whom passed their lives in this toilsome occupation, it is scarcely necessary here to mention ; but it may not be so generally known that, when the necessity of such labor

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was superseded by the invention of printing, the very first use which was made, at least on a large scale, of that most invaluable of all discoveries, was for the publication of various editions of the Bible. Those first published were, as might be expected, in the sacred language; but as early as 1466, a German Bible was printed, two copies of which are still preserved in the Senatorial Library at Leipsic.

That at the present day there is an abundant supply of Catholic Bibles in the vernacular languages is admitted on all hands, and that, too, under the unhesitating sanction of the highest authorities of the Church. Any Protestant who will take the trouble to open an English Catholic Bible will find, as a sort of preface to it, a copy of a letter from Pope Pius VI. to the Most Rev. Antonio Martini, Archbishop of Florence, on the occasion of his having published a translation of the holy Bible into Italian, in which he expresses the highest approbation of his work, saying that, "at a time when a vast number of bad books, which grossly attack the Catholic religion, are circulated even among the unlearned, to the great destruction of souls, it was rightly judged that the faithful should be excited to the read-

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ing of the holy Scriptures; for these are the most abundant sources, which ought to be left open to every one, to draw from them purity of morals and of doctrine, to eradicate the errors which are so widely disseminated in these corrupt times." As to the English Catholic Bible itself, the Douay version, as it is called, it is so well known to be used by the faithful in this country with the full sanction of ecclesiastical authority, that, like the Vulgate, of which it is a translation, it is absolutely identified in the minds of Protestants with Popery itself. However, as most of the versions now in use were made since the Reformation, we, of course, get no credit for them, as we are supposed to have been shamed into making them by Protestant example; and whether or not any versions existed in these same languages before that epoch, few take the trouble to inquire. Those who have done so, however, inform us that (not to speak of other countries) in Italy itself, the very centre of Catholicism and the dwelling-place of the Pope, no fewer than eight editions of the Bible in the vernacular tongue were printed before the year 1500.

Thus plentifully, from age to age, has the Catholic Church disseminated these treasures

of divine wisdom committed to their charge. Her office of dispenser of holy Scripture, however, involves in it, as we have said, the power of withholding, as well as that of bestowing. A mother, when she distributes food among her children, regulates its quantity, and the time and manner of their receiving it, according to what she knows of the individual needs of each; and she as often shows her maternal care and affection in restraining, as in satisfying, their appetites; nay, sometimes, as in cases of sickness, she may deem it necessary for a while to keep from them certain kinds of food altogether. So it is with our Mother the Church. We are all infants in spiritual things, often very weak and sickly ones; and we have to look to her, not only to give us our meat in due season, but also to withhold it at such times as she shall judge it to be injurious to us; and surely her thus withholding it ought not to be construed into any disparagement on her part of the food itself. It is thus that she deals with the Sacraments: she does not bestow them in the same measure on all; some of them indeed, as Orders and Matrimony, she reserves exclusively for persons entering on certain states of life; and of those which are intended

for the benefit of all Christians, even the very chief, the Body and Blood of our blessed Lord, which is the spiritual food without which we have no life in us, she does not allow all to approach with the same frequency; nay, from such as are, in her judgment, in an unfit state to receive it (so long as they continue in that state) she withholds it altogether. Yet none, even among her enemies, have therefore charged her with disparaging the Sacraments. And it is manifest that the more sacred the treasure committed to her charge, tho' more exact ought to be her stewardship of it, and the more sedulously ought she to guard it from profanation, and from being in any way perverted from the purpose for which Almighty God designed it. Now, with respect to holy Scripture, for individuals to attempt to gather the articles of their faith from it for themselves, is, in her judgment, thus to pervert it. It is one of her fundamental principles—a principle, indeed, involved in the very fact of her own existence—that it was not the purpose of Almighty God that this should be, and consequently that it has not pleased Him to cast Scripture into such a form that it can thus be used with success, nor to gift individual men

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with any faculties, natural or supernatural, which can enable them thus to use it. To attempt to do so is therefore, in her judgment, practically to assert that to be the purpose of God which is not His purpose, and that to be possible which He has made impossible;—that is, to act a lie; and one, moreover, which brings ruin to the souls of those who are seduced by it. Now judging thus, can she, in reason and charity, do otherwise than endeavor to check this spirit of falsehood, even at the cost of withholding the sacred text from those who are thus misusing it, or in danger of so doing? If a madman, instead of using his knife to cut his food, should persist in attempting to cut with it his own throat or that of his neighbors, who would stand on much ceremony as to snatching it out of his hand?

And if we look to the facts of the Church's conduct in this matter, we shall find that any formal restrictions which she ever laid on the reading of Scripture by individuals—and such have been few in number—have been caused by distinct abuses of this kind; by individuals having promulgated their own interpretations of certain passages of Scripture, and heresies and schisms, as must needs be, having arisen

in consequence. There never has been a heresy from the beginning, however wild and monstrous, which its maintainers did not profess to find in holy Scripture. And who shall gainsay them on any but the Catholic principle of an infallible interpreter? For if there be none such, why has not one man a right to interpret Scripture for himself as well as another? At any rate, so it is; all those old heresies, some of which are now entirely dead and forgotten, and most of which would be repudiated (in name at least) by the majority of Protestants in this country, were all in their day maintained as scriptural with as much confidence as the various Protestant opinions are now; so that an ancient Father says, that "in Scripture itself the devil lays a snare for the faithful, to make them heretics;" and another, that "heretics take the Gospel of Christ and make it the Gospel of the devil by their perversions."

The first instance, however (at least the first of which any distinct record seems to be preserved), of any thing like a formal prohibition on the part of the Church of the indiscriminate reading of Scripture in the vulgar tongue was one made by a local synod and for a temporary

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purpose. In a council of Bishops, held under the authority of a papal legate, in the city of Toulouse, in the year 1229, it was decreed that the use of translations in the vulgar tongue of the books of the Old and New Testaments should not be allowed to laymen. If we look into the history of the time when this prohibition was issued, we shall see that heresies of the most fearful kind were rife in various parts of Europe, especially in the south of France; and that these, like former heresies, had spread themselves, in the first instance, by means of private interpretations of Scripture. About thirty years before this council was held, we find by a letter from the Bishop of Metz to Pope Innocent III., that in his diocese there were held secret meetings for the purpose of reading the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, and expounding them; and the persons frequenting these meetings, the Bishop adds, "despised their lawful pastors, and laughed at their sermons." In answer to this letter, the Pope said that the desire to read and understand holy Scripture was "commendable rather than blame-worthy;" but that the despising the lawful pastors, even though they might be unlearned, and the frequenting secret assemblies,

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in which unauthorized persons might preach, was, of course, to be blamed. He also desired the Bishop to examine the version of holy Scripture which they used, and to inquire who was its author, and whether he was sound in the faith.

It soon appeared, however, that these persons had no respect for ecclesiastical authority of any kind; they continued their secret meetings and private expoundings of Scripture; and the same spirit spreading, as is generally the case, in many different places at once, broke out at last into an open heresy, or rather into many heresies, which raged more especially in the south of France. Protestants in general, at the present day, make common cause, as a matter of course, with these heretics of the thirteenth century, simply on account of their hostility to the Church, and rejection of many of its doctrines, which Protestants also reject; but those among them who have really taken the trouble to look into the subject have discovered that they have little reason to be proud of these their brethren, and have been eager to disown them. "Some of them denied the reality of Christ's Body; others His being the Son of God; many the resurrection of the

body; and some even a future state."* But the most formidable among them, both from their numbers and their organization, were the Albigenses. These sprung from the remains of a sect as ancient as the third century after our Lord's birth, called the Manichæans, whose doctrines contained fragments of Christianity, mixed up with wild dreams from some of the Eastern mythologies. This sect, which had never entirely died out, had reappeared in the seventh century under the name of Paulicians; and again in the eleventh had spread from the Eastern countries of Europe, where it had been lurking, to the Western, and had taken possession more especially of the south of France, where, from the town of Albi, they received the name of Albigenses. They held the existence of two Gods, a good and a bad one; the former, the author of the New Testament and creator of all invisible things; the latter, the author of the Old Testament, and creator of man's body and of all visible things. They rejected marriage, and at the same time practised, it is said, the most scandalous immoralities. They said that the patriarchs and prophets of the Old Testament were all damned; that St.

* Hallam, *Middle Ages*, iii. 466.

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John the Baptist was a demon; and that the resurrection of the body was a lie. "This opinion" (their leading doctrine of two principles), says the Protestant historian already quoted, "strange as we may think it, was supported by Scripture texts; so insufficient is a mere acquaintance with the sacred writings to secure unlearned and prejudiced minds from the wildest perversions of their meaning." This judgment of a learned Protestant of the nineteenth century was that also of the ecclesiastical authorities in the thirteenth; and if we consider that the Church holds errors in faith to be fatal to the salvation of men's souls, we shall not wonder much at the decision of the Council of Toulouse, nor regard as other than a due exercise of maternal prudence on the part of the Church, the withholding for a time that which had been, as is allowed on all hands, so miserably perverted.

And if we go on to a later period, to the yet more serious troubles of the 16th century, we shall find that "the Bible, and the Bible only," was still the watchword of every kind of heresy. Not only Lutherans and Calvinists, but Anabaptists also, and Socinians, however utterly discordant their opinions from one an-

other, all joined alike in this cry. And accordingly, at the Council of Trent, all the questions then current concerning holy Scripture, and its use and abuse, were entered into at full length.

In the fourth session of the council, after the canon of Scripture and the authority of apostolical traditions had been discussed and settled, the question of the abuses of Scripture came next under consideration; and these were classed under four heads. The first of these was the great variety of translations, which caused uncertainty as to the real tenor of the Word of God. To remedy this, it was judged that one only translation should be regarded as authorized (though the others were not condemned, their merit not being examined); and that called the Vulgate was the one selected and accepted, as being the most ancient; the most in use; as representing the ancient copies of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures more correctly than any other Latin version, or probably even than any then existing Greek or Hebrew edition; and, finally, as having been made before any of the modern disputes had arisen, and so as being necessarily unbiased by them. The second abuse men-

tioned was the incorrectness of all the editions of the Bible; to remedy which it was advised that a new edition of the most exquisite correctness should be prepared under the eye of the Pope himself, of which a copy should be consigned to every cathedral church, which was afterwards done. The unbounded license of interpretation was next complained of, as the source of all the evils then raging; and it was proposed that none should be allowed to interpret them otherwise than according to the sense of the Church and the Fathers. This word "*otherwise*" was objected to, and that of "*contrariwise*" substituted, on the ground that it was not unlawful to suggest a new meaning for any passage of Scripture, where the Church had not already assigned to that passage any determinate interpretation. In the same spirit—surely the very opposite of narrow-mindedness—when one of the prelates present proposed that none but doctors or clerics should be allowed to interpret Scripture, the proposal was immediately and almost unanimously rejected, on the ground that "the blessed work of illustrating the Word of God was not to be restricted to any personal quality, as neither piety nor learning were so restricted; that the

heavenly word is written to every Christian, and that meditation upon it is a study open to every Christian :" only it was determined that the result of their meditations should not be given to the world without having first been subjected to an ecclesiastical censorship; neither should they be published without the name of the author. The fourth and last abuse complained of was the readiness of printers to publish incorrect editions of Scripture, and unauthorized and anonymous interpretations.

After all these matters had been settled, the subject of translations of Scripture into the vulgar tongues was next considered, and discussed at great length, and with the earnestness which so important a question demanded. And after duly weighing, on the one hand, the evils which were likely to arise, and indeed had already arisen, from the indiscriminate reading of Scripture, and on the other, the benefits to be derived by devout and humble souls from the study of the words of Inspiration, the Council came to the conclusion, not of destroying or prohibiting such translations, but of putting the use of them by individuals under certain restrictions, subject to the discretion of ecclesiastical superiors.

Thus the Congregation of the Index,—a deputation from the Council, of eighteen Fathers, for the purpose of making a list of such books as are not allowed to the faithful without special permission,—in the fourth rule they drew up, stated that as, on account of the rashness of men, evil had resulted from the indiscriminate use of Scripture in the vulgar tongues, it should be left to the judgment of the ecclesiastical superiors, after taking counsel with the parish priest or the confessor, to give permission for such reading to those who, as they knew, would “receive no detriment from the same, but rather an increase of faith and piety.” These rules of the Index, it should be observed, are not enforced, or, as it is technically called published, in all countries (not, for instance, in our own), nor are they generally held to be binding on the conscience of individuals in countries where they are not so published. Still, however, as is clear, they are an indication at least of the mind of the Church; neither does this fourth rule at all contradict that letter of Pope Pius VI. which we have already quoted; for if any are to be permitted to read the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue, there must needs be translations for them to

read; and when the Pope exhorts that the faithful should be incited to read the Scriptures, he intends, of course, that they should be duly instructed and prepared for such reading; and this is virtually the condition which the rule in question requires.

In our own country, at the present day, certainly no general prohibition of the kind is supposed to exist: on the contrary, it is commonly considered as most desirable that even our poorer Catholics should be sufficiently well read in the Bible not to be easily perplexed by the "text-quoting" of their Protestant neighbors; and to that end Bibles and Testaments are published in the cheapest possible forms, and liberally distributed by priests among their flocks. On the other hand, the near contact of Protestantism ought to make us especially dread the contagion of the Protestant spirit; we ought therefore, even beyond all others, to be on our guard, lest the Word of Life should be to us the food of death.

We cannot take our leave of this subject without observing that there are other reasons, not connected with faith, which would make it questionable, one would think, even to Protestants, how far it is desirable to put some por-

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tions at least of the Old Testament into the hands of people in general, and which, to Catholic parents, would be quite conclusive against allowing such to be read by young persons. As regards Protestants, it seems utterly inexplicable why, declaiming so violently as they do against the mere mention by name of particular sins in some of our popular examinations of conscience, and certain details to be found in our works on moral theology, written in a learned language and never intended for general use, they should yet be altogether without apprehension as to the possibility of mischief arising from the indiscriminate reading of every portion of the Bible.

We have thus briefly summed up all that the Church has done in the way of direct or formal restriction on the reading of Scripture, with the exception of local regulations, from time to time, under peculiar circumstances. But to gain an insight into her real principle and spirit in this matter, we must examine, not her formal decrees alone, but her practice from age to age. But as this would exceed our present space, we shall endeavor, on another occasion, to enter into the subject more deeply, in considering the Church as our instructor in

holy Scripture. Enough, however, has been already said to show how utterly Protestants misstate the question when they accuse the Catholic Church, in general terms, of withholding the Scriptures from the laity; whereas what she has really done has been simply to reserve to herself the authority to restrain from reading those Scriptures at particular times, and under particular circumstances, those who, as she knows, are entering on the study (or in danger of doing so) on a principle utterly false in itself and involving utterly ruinous consequences. To withhold altogether and to withhold at times are different things: the one is to deny, the other is but a necessary part of the economy of dispensing. When it is said that the faithful and wise servant is set over his Lord's household, to give them their meat *in due season*, does not this imply that the same meat should be withheld *out of season*?

THE CHURCH
OUR
INSTRUCTOR IN SCRIPTURE;
OR,

Do Catholics know any thing of the Bible?



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THE CHURCH OUR INSTRUCTOR IN SCRIPTURE.

WE have on a former occasion considered the Church as the Dispenser of Holy Scripture, and have endeavored to show the principle on which she has acted in the fulfilment of that office,—here bestowing, there withholding, as she has judged most expedient for the wants of her children, but ever with the same object of more perfectly instructing them and more safely guiding them in the way of salvation. But while we freely admit that there have been times when she has laid restrictions on the reading of the Holy Scriptures themselves by individuals,—nay, further, that at no time would she encourage such reading by all persons absolutely without reserve,—it must not be for a moment supposed that, in so doing, she was or is withholding from her children the means of becoming acquainted with divine truth. On the contrary, to bestow such means of instruc-

tion has been, in all ages, the object of her most strenuous efforts; so that, whether or not she has considered it desirable that all should be equally familiar with the sacred Scriptures themselves as a whole, she has ever most fervently desired that all should be instructed, to the utmost limit of their capacity, in the subject-matter of divine revelation.

For what is divine revelation intended to teach us? Nothing less than that one great science, which we must all learn as we value our salvation—that which is emphatically called the *sacred science*; for it is in fact the very wisdom of God, as He has been pleased to reveal it to His creatures. It makes known to us a system of truths concerning His own nature, and concerning creatures as they relate to Him—more especially concerning ourselves, the end of our being, and the means of accomplishing that end. This is, indeed, the most excellent of sciences, since it treats of God, the very fountain of all excellence; and the most important to ourselves, since it teaches us for what end we were created, and how we may attain it; or, in other words, how we may attain the perfection of our being, or what we call happiness. Surely this is the one master-science to which

all others are immeasurably inferior, being indeed only really valuable in proportion as they minister to this. And moreover, though this science, in its higher developments, would drain to the uttermost the noblest created intelligence, and remain itself unexhausted and unfathomed, yet in its elements it may be apprehended by the simplest child; and in those elements all must be instructed, at least in some degree, who are come to the use of reason, as they hope for happiness hereafter; for God has willed that faith in the truths He has revealed should be a condition of our salvation; and, in order to believe, it is evident that we must know what we have to believe.

Such, then, is the science which it is the office and design of the Church to impart to each and all of her children in such measure as they are capable of receiving it. Let this be well understood. The Church is our appointed instructor in divine truth and the way of salvation. It is this knowledge—emphatically this, and not the mere text of the Bible—which it is the object of the Church to impart. But inasmuch as the Bible is the inspired word of God and a treasury of divine truths, when her children are sufficiently instructed in the faith, and have suffi-

cient humility to derive benefit from the immediate perusal of the written word under her guiding interpretation, she freely and joyfully puts part or the whole of it into their hands, that they may nourish their souls and grow thereby. We know that our blessed Lord came upon earth in a threefold character: as our Priest, to offer Himself in sacrifice for us; as our King, to found a kingdom which should never be removed; and also as our Prophet, to instruct us in the things of God. And this threefold character we believe Him to have bequeathed to the Church, His spouse and representative among men. She too offers her Lord in sacrifice; she too rules over us with royal sway; and she too instructs us in the sacred wisdom which He has revealed to her. "Go ye and teach all nations," was our Lord's commission to the Apostles, her first rulers; and this commission has never been rescinded; and in virtue of it the Church in the present day, as in the time of the Apostles, goes forth teaching all nations the things that belong to their peace; and in this her instruction her great text-book is, as it has ever been, Holy Scripture.

It must not be supposed, then, that the Church derived, in the first instance, from Scrip-

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ture that which she is commissioned to impart to us; for the Apostles had preached the Gospel in almost all the lands then known, and thousands had been gathered into her bosom, before a single line of the New Testament was written; as a popular Protestant writer has well said, "The world did not believe because the Scriptures were written, but the Scriptures were written because the world believed." Indeed, we have but to look into the pages of the New Testament to see that it was not intended as a promulgation of the faith to those who had it not, but that it constantly presupposes that faith as already received. Thus, though the Church, and not the Bible, is the teacher commissioned by God, yet as Holy Scripture is the record made under the direct inspiration of the Spirit of God, and designed for the edification of the body of Christ, the Church has ever held it as most sacred, and has used it, as we have said, as her great text-book, making it, in every age, the centre of her whole circle of instruction, however comprehensive that may have been. Holy Scripture has ever been the theme on which the minds of her most gifted children have delighted to exercise themselves; upon this saints and doctors and fathers of the Church

have concentrated all their powers, so that there is not a single line of it which has not been the subject of learned research and profound meditation, and scarcely a name among all the bright array of saints,—at least among those who were in any degree men of intellectual as well as spiritual attainments,—which is not appended to a commentary on some portion or other of Holy Scripture. The Psalms alone have employed a series of great names, so long that it would be tedious to enumerate them, headed by St. Augustine and St. Ambrose. St. Gregory, the apostle of this country, even in the midst of the cares of his pontificate, found time to write a commentary on the book of Job, a book of homilies on the Gospels, and another on the Prophet Ezekiel. St. Bernard expounded the Canticle of Canticles; but it is idle to select individual names, when, as we have said, every holy father in turn has bequeathed to us the result of his meditations on one book or another; and every book, without exception, has had its commentator. And the rich fruits of these accumulated energies (the energies, let us remember, of more than eighteen centuries) are gathered up from age to age in the treasure-house of the Church; a store from whence to

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draw for the instruction of her children through all generations. Holy Scripture may, then, most truly be called the text-book of the Church; and now, as in times past, she labors zealously to impart to us the sacred wisdom it contains, not only by presenting to us the written word itself; not only by the direct teaching of her clergy, a body of men set apart and carefully trained for that office, but by her various ordinances, her rituals, her popular devotions, the practices she inculcates upon us, the examples she sets before us—indeed, we may say, by the whole course of her external and internal life, all which affords a living commentary on Scripture, such as he who runs may read.

With regard to her manner of dealing with the sacred text itself, we have spoken at sufficient length elsewhere; and moreover we are only concerned, on the present occasion, with those means of instruction in Scripture which are peculiar to Catholicism. The fact of setting apart a body of men whose especial duty it is to convey such instruction to the mass of the people, cannot fairly be considered as peculiar to ourselves, for Protestants also do the same. But there is a wide difference between the claims to attention presented by our teachers,

and those which can be put forth by the teachers of any of the sects which have separated themselves from us, even considering the matter in its merely human aspect. To help him in the interpretation of Scripture, a Protestant minister can enjoy but at best the results of a three hundred years' study of the Bible, seeing that, at the time of the so-called Reformation, men in becoming Protestants renounced as corrupt and untrustworthy the received interpretation of the Church. But, in point of fact, he cannot really enjoy even this benefit, since the exercise of his private judgment binds him as it were to start afresh; and if he reads the writings of his predecessors at all, yet he is certainly precluded from taking them as authorities. If he attempts to dive into antiquity, with the hope of discovering what was the teaching of the primitive Church, he will draw from thence only a few disjointed and fragmentary truths, which, as recent experience has proved, he will endeavor in vain to force into junction with the system to which he belongs, like one pouring new wine into old bottles, or joining new cloth to an old garment. The link between the present and the past is to be found in the Catholic Church alone; all who have left her have let

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the chain drop, and such as are sensible of the loss feel about in vain to recover it. They have left the path on which the light of a living tradition shines, and before their eyes the monuments of past ages lie wrapt in darkness and confusion. But the Catholic priest is trained, generally from his early childhood, in the full light of the Church's teaching, both written and unwritten ; he is the inheritor of the sacred wisdom accumulated, as we have seen, during a course of more than eighteen centuries, and collected from almost every nation under heaven, which, in each succeeding age, as need required, has been condensed, sifted, digested, and rendered fit for use, each generation thus profiting by the labors of those who have preceded it, directed by the authoritative mind of the living Church. Then, as to his knowledge of the letter of Scripture, from the mere daily devotions which he is required to perform, a large portion of it must necessarily become familiar to him as household words ; the Psalter especially must be continually upon his lips, till it can scarcely be otherwise than natural to him as the breathings of his own heart. Other parts, too, of the Old and New Testament, comprising, in fact, almost the whole of it, he has thus to read in

regular order, day after day, through his whole life. In the ages before printing was invented, and when books were consequently very scarce, and the lives of many priests, especially religious, were spent in transcribing them, this familiarity with Holy Scripture must have been even greater than it is now, and for this simple reason, that at that time, from the mere fact of books being scarce, much more use was made of the memory in education than now; large portions of Scripture, as well as of other books, were learnt by heart. Indeed, if we wish to see how entirely familiar with Holy Scripture the more educated men of those days really were, we have but to look into the correspondence which has come down to us, in various forms, between the men of letters, who were chiefly clergy; and we shall find that Scripture language had become quite their natural mode of expression, which they constantly used, not at all in the strained way of modern Puritans, but apparently without being conscious of it. The abundant supply of books in the present day has, of course, superseded the necessity of learning so much by heart; but still the selfsame daily devotions which the Church, in those days, required of her priest-

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hood, she requires of them still, and from the performance of these nothing but strict necessity can dispense them. Of all the teachers of the various sects, who are so often (in ignorance, we believe) apt to declaim against the "unscriptural priesthood of Rome," it would be hard, we think, to find one whose voluntary reading of Scripture, from day to day, amounts in quantity to that which is of positive obligation to the Catholic priest.

And how carefully the Church inculcates on her priests the temper and spirit in which they are to instruct their people, we may see if we turn to the Catechism of the Council of Trent, which is addressed especially to them: "Pastors must always remember," it is there said, "that all the knowledge of a Christian man is comprehended under this one head; or rather, as our Saviour Himself says, 'This is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' Wherefore the labors of an ecclesiastical teacher should be chiefly directed to this object, that the faithful should desire thoroughly to know Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and should be fully persuaded, and believe with the deepest inward piety and devotion of heart, that

there is no other name under heaven given unto men whereby they may be saved; for He is the propitiation for our sins. But, because by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commandments, it is next in order, and closely joined with what we have said, that the teacher should show his people that life ought not to be passed by the faithful in sloth and vanity; but that, even as He walked, so we should walk also, and should zealously follow justice, mercy, faithfulness, charity, gentleness; for He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to Himself an acceptable people, following good works; which things the Apostle commanded pastors to teach and exhort." They are further admonished to meditate on the word of God day and night, remembering the admonition of St. Paul, which, written originally to St. Timothy, all who have the care of souls are directed to consider as addressed to themselves: "Attend to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. All scripture, divinely inspired, is useful to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." They are charged further, to adapt their teaching to the wants of

their people; to feed some, according to the saying of the apostle St. Paul, with milk, as new-born babes in Christ, and others with strong meat; to be careful and considerate in affording to each what his especial needs require, that so the little ones perish not for lack of one to administer bread to them, and they also who have their senses exercised find the spiritual food they need; and not to be weary or fastidious because, being themselves used to the contemplation of sublime things, they are obliged to discourse to their hearers concerning first principles, remembering "that the very Wisdom of the Eternal Father came down upon earth, that, in the lowness of our flesh, He might hand down to us the precepts of the heavenly life. Who would not, therefore, be constrained by the love of Christ to become as a little one in the midst of the brethren, and, even as a nurse, cherishing her children?"

Thus carefully does the Church endeavor to instil into her pastors the true spirit of their calling as teachers of the faithful. But she does not leave us (as the unlearned of all communities out of her pale must necessarily be left, in great measure,) dependent for all our religious knowledge on the direct means of instruc-

tion, viz., teaching and preaching, important and indeed essential as these are; she impresses the same sacred knowledge on our minds by her holy ordinances and ceremonies, and other like means of various kinds, with which the greater or less capability of this or that individual priest has comparatively little or nothing to do.

It will help us to consider this part of our subject if we endeavor to realize in our own minds what the knowledge is with which Christians require to be furnished, and which Protestants profess to seek for in Holy Scripture. And here we cannot do better than adopt the classification suggested by the Catechism which we have already quoted, which gathers up all "the knowledge of a Christian man" under four principal heads, which she recommends to her pastors as the texts, so to speak, for their teaching, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the doctrine of the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer. "All that is included," it goes on to say, "in the discipline of the Christian faith, belonging either to the knowledge of God, or to His creation and government of the world, or to the redemption of the human race, or to the rewards of the good and the punish-

ments of the wicked, are contained in the doctrine of the Creed. Those things which are signs and instruments, as it were, of obtaining Divine grace, are embraced under the doctrine of the Sacraments. All that belongs to the laws, the end of which is charity, may be treated of under the head of the Decalogue. Lastly, whatever may be wished for, hoped for, or sought by men for their good, is comprehended in the Lord's Prayer. Wherefore it follows, that these four, which may be called the *commonplaces* of Holy Scripture, being duly explained, nothing will be lacking for the understanding of those things which must be learnt by a Christian man." Or, in other words, we must learn what we have to believe, and what we have to do, symbolized respectively by the Creed and the Ten Commandments; and what means we are to use in order to be enabled thus to believe and thus to do, namely, the Sacraments and Prayer.

Now in the truths which come under these four general heads, the Church, by her own perpetual ordinance, furnishes us with abundant means of instruction, the heritage of every Catholic as such, though (it may be) bestowed in richer measure at one time and place than

another, as circumstances are more or less favorable for the development of her inherent energies. To take the first, what we have to believe (which again may be subdivided into doctrines and facts, though these two are, in truth, quite inseparably interwoven); we contend that none out of the Church can command the means of attaining that distinct knowledge of the doctrines, and that vivid realization of the facts of Scripture, which she offers to all her children with a liberal hand.

First, as to the doctrines contained in Holy Scripture: what these are is the question at issue, not only between the Church and the sects which have separated from her, but between those sects themselves. With these last, however, though there is endless disagreement on this subject, yet in one point they all agree, and it is this: that the system professed by each of them respectively is a theory, started for the most part in the first instance by an individual, and (which, indeed, is a matter of boast to them) grounded on Holy Scripture itself, or at least on the view of it taken by that individual, and therefore not even pretending to throw on Scripture a light derived from any external source. But in this respect the Catholic Church

stands entirely alone and on a vantage-ground, inasmuch as the system of doctrine which she imparts to her children was not, as we have already said, originally derived from Scripture, but came directly from Him by whom Scripture was inspired ; so that it throws upon Scripture a strong light, so to speak, from without. Protestants of course assert that our system of doctrine is false ; but none would deny that, supposing it to be true, it would furnish a means of instruction in Scripture of a far superior character to any which a system professedly grounded on the study of its own pages alone could afford. Thus much too all must admit, that the Catholic system is one peculiarly clear and consistent with itself ; and we cannot but think that any one carefully and impartially examining it, and comparing it with Scripture, would be constrained to admit further, that it is one which singularly harmonizes therewith, which can look every single line of it in the face, and which throws light on many passages unintelligible without it. Not that this system, any more than any other, could be deduced from Scripture ; but that, once received, it agrees with and explains Scripture ; that it is to it as the clue to the labyrinth, or the key to the

cipher. Now, in this system every Catholic is instructed from his very cradle; he learns it in creeds and catechisms, and more especially in the explanations of these which he receives, first from the lips of his mother, and afterwards of his pastor, until it is so wrought into the very structure of his mind, that he feels in after years as if the knowledge of these truths had been born with him. And however others may judge of them, he is convinced with a certainty which nothing can shake, that these alone enable him either to understand Holy Writ, or to apply it profitably to his own soul.

But the doctrines of the Gospel are, as we have said, interwoven with certain facts on which they repose, and the knowledge of which is therefore most needful to the Christian. Of these the chief are, of course, those included in the sacred life, passion, and death of our Blessed Lord; in His glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and in the early history of His Church: but there is scarcely an event recorded in any part of the Bible, whether in the Old or New Testament, which is not most important and interesting, because it is in some way connected with these. Now time and space would both fail us if we were to attempt to enumerate

all the means which have ever been, and are now, employed by the Church for the purpose of impressing these on the memory of her children. To take one single means as an instance: the whole history of the art of painting in modern Europe, at least in its earlier developments, is a history of earnest labor on the part of the Church to this end. Even in the Catacombs—those darksome vaults under the city of Rome, where the Christians were wont to meet in the ages of persecution, to celebrate the sacred rites of their holy religion—we find the walls adorned with paintings; rude indeed, because the Christians were not then, for the most part, of the wealthier and more cultivated classes, and also because they wrought in fear and haste, and under great disadvantages, but yet sufficiently expressive to imprint on the minds of the people those mysteries of Holy Writ which it was most necessary for them to know and to meditate upon in the midst of their bitter trials. In after times painting was employed yet more systematically for the instruction of the poor and ignorant. Thus the synod of Arras, in 1205, expressly declared "that painting was the book of the ignorant, who could read no other." And any who have had the pleasure

of visiting southern lands, where art especially flourished, have seen the walls of churches and convents, baptisteries and cemeteries, covered with beautiful fresco-paintings, as they are called, portraying the various events of Holy Writ, so as to catch the eye of the multitudes, who could not but learn those events, and the doctrines implied under them and illustrated by them, from these pictures, even more effectually in some respects than from reading. In these northern climates, where fresco-painting was not so much practised, the art of painting on glass was invented, and professedly employed for the same purpose. In the Church of St. Nixer at Troyes, there was formerly an inscription over the principal door declaring that a certain curé had caused three windows to be painted, "in order to serve as a catechism and instruction to the people." In short, Holy Scripture was the one chief source of inspiration to the artists of those ages of faith; and the object they proposed to themselves in their labors, next to the offering up the work of their hands as a direct act of worship to Almighty God, was the instructing their brethren in the mysteries contained in Holy Writ; and so sacred did they esteem their calling, that of

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some, who were also monks, we read that, before beginning any new work, they always prepared themselves by fasting and prayer. Even at the present day, when the more ready access to the sacred text itself may be supposed to render the aid of painting less indispensable, the Catholic Church, as we know, makes large use of pictures. There is not a child trained in a Catholic school who does not become possessed of at least some little cheap prints on holy subjects; and any one used to children well knows how easily any fact which they see represented in a picture not only fixes itself in their memory, but also lays hold of their imagination and affections. Our churches too, even in this country, where we are hampered by poverty, are almost always adorned with pictures of some sort or other; for as their object is instruction, indifferent ones are held to be better than none at all. The very crucifix, which is considered indispensable to every Catholic, is in itself an ever-open Bible.

Another means, still more impressive, which the Church employs for fixing in our minds these great facts, is her own ritual, her settled order of devotions, and the pious practices which she recommends. Thus in the daily sac-

sifice of the Mass, which is a renewal, after an unbloody manner, of the sacrifice on Calvary, the faithful are taught that one most acceptable way of assisting thereat is to make a meditation on the Passion. Then, thrice a day, the reciting of what is called the Angelus (a brief devotional recapitulation of the angelical salutation, our Blessed Lady's reply to it, and the mysterious event which ensued), cannot but imprint on our minds the mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord; which, again, is brought vividly before us, in a special manner, twice every day in the course of the Mass, when we kneel during the recitation of the Creed, at the words, "and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man;" and at those other words in the last Gospel, "and the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us." Our popular devotions too are directed to the same end: the Rosary, for instance, which very many Catholics recite daily, involves a daily recurrence to the most prominent mysteries of our faith: on one day, when the joyful mysteries are celebrated, to the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation in the Temple, and the Finding of the child Jesus in the midst of the doctors; on the next, to the sor-

rowful mysteries, the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion; and then to the glorious mysteries, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption of our Lady into Heaven, her Coronation, and the Glory of all the Saints; all these, with the exception of the two last, being recorded in Holy Scripture. Then, again, the Devotion of the Stations, which is a very popular one, leads us in detail through fourteen stages of the Passion of our Blessed Lord. Indeed, the Church's whole yearly round of fast and festival is itself a living commentary on the Gospel of our Lord; by it the facts of His sacred Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension, and those connected with the foundation of His Church, all which form the main subject-matter of the New Testament Scriptures, are brought before us in turn, and in a way much more calculated to impress them deeply on our minds than in the mere reading the record of them in a book; though, in truth, the fast or festival is almost always accompanied by the public reading and expounding by the priest of the portion of Scripture which refers to the event it celebrates. Surely the forty days of Lent, bringing

with them, as they do, the dark-colored vestments, the saddened ritual, and more especially the practical accompaniment of bodily mortification, must imprint on our memory the real fact of our Lord's fasting in the wilderness and its signification, to a degree which could not be effected by the mere reading of the Gospel narrative without such lively comment. So also the intensity of the Church's mourning in Holy Week, prepared for, as it always is, during the weeks of Lent, by preaching or careful explanation of some sort; and then the Paschal gladness which succeeds it, are a translation, so to speak, of the words of Holy Writ into life and action, and make the events they record, as it were, present before us, and acted under our very eyes.

These instances, which are but a few out of very many which might be adduced, are sufficient to show how amply the Church has provided for our instruction, in that portion of Scripture which contains the truths we have to believe. And she is no less careful in instructing us in that which contains the laws we have to obey; the system which we are taught in her catechisms, and which her pastors expound to us, embraces morals as well as faith; and the

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principles of morals, as they regard every one of us, are brought down to our own immediate comprehension, and applied to our own peculiar needs, by that ordinance of the Church to which our enemies most object, namely confession. By means of this, every question our consciences suggest may be answered, every doubt as to our own individual duty solved, and every needful means suggested to us for our improvement in holiness. The Church speaks to us with no uncertain sound in morals any more than in faith; she teaches us what is of precept, and what of counsel; that is, what virtues are strictly obligatory upon all, and what are required only of those who aspire to perfection; in short, she is to us the living interpreter of the laws contained in Holy Scripture. And she does more than interpret them for us; she furnishes us with examples of strict obedience to them, and with means of obeying them ourselves, according to our respective callings and the degrees of grace given us. Every saint whose history the Church records for our admiration and imitation is in himself a commentary on the precepts and counsels given by our Lord, and also a copy, to a certain extent, of His sacred life. "Be ye followers of me,"

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says St. Paul, "as I also am of Christ." Now this commemoration of the saints and study of their lives is almost unknown out of the Church; but those within her blessed pale know well how much light is thrown by such commemoration and study upon the law of God contained in His inspired book. Each of the Beatitudes, for instance, spoken by our Lord in his Sermon on the Mount, has been, in its turn, the fruitful germ of kindred virtue in the breast of some holy and highly-gifted soul, who has cherished and cultivated it to the uttermost, and often bequeathed the cultivation of it to some holy institute which has borne his name. Thus the words, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," may be said to have engendered the character of St. Francis and that of the religious order which he founded, the peculiar spirit of both being an intense realization of this blessing. In fact, all religious communities, so far as they keep alive within them the spirit of their institute, are in themselves a practical exposition of some portion of the moral teaching of the Gospel; some especially devote themselves to the practice of active charity, some of divine contemplation, some of holy mourning; but all are like a bright halo gathered round



some one luminous point, that point being a text of Holy Writ.

Then, again, in the two last of the four great heads under which, as we have said, all scriptural instruction may be included, namely, the Sacraments and Prayer, the Church provides us, we need scarcely say it, with an inexhaustible treasure of instruction. As to the doctrine of the Sacraments, there is not a child in a Catholic country who is not instructed in it, or who has not the opportunity of becoming so, to the fullest amount his necessities can require; while, at the same time, the depth and beauty of the subject are inexhaustible, offering the more food for thought, the more earnestly the mind dwells upon them. Here too we feel the blessing of the Church's distinct and authoritative teaching, and also of its exact harmony with Scripture. We are not left to doubt what blessing our babes have received at their baptism, or whether they have received any; we are not told that the saying of our Lord, that we must be born of water and of the spirit, if we would enter the kingdom of heaven, is a hard saying and of doubtful meaning, so that some divines expound it one way, some another. We know what we believe and what we have

to expect, and take the sacred words of our Lord fearlessly and in their very letter. So, again, as to the Sacrament of Penance; it surely furnishes the only satisfactory explanation of our Lord's saying to His Apostles, "Whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; whose sins you retain, they are retained." This, again, we take in its literal sense; and the sacred words and the Church's practice mutually expound and corroborate each other. We might in like manner go through all the Sacraments; but our space prevents us. We will only allude to that greatest of them all, in which we receive the Body and Blood of our Lord. Surely here the Catholic belief affords the only possible interpretation of the portions of Holy Scripture which relate to the subject; for all others are not an interpretation at all, but a simple putting aside. What other belief, for instance, leaves ~~any~~ thing like a satisfactory meaning, we will not say to our Lord's declaration, This is My body (for that of course *might* be figurative, if the context favored the idea of its being so), but to the sixth chapter of St. John? in which the Catholic doctrine is conveyed again and again in words as explicit, it would seem, as ~~any~~ that could be chosen. In short, the whole

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teaching of the Church on this great subject of the Sacraments is an instruction in Scripture, an instruction of the most interesting character and the greatest practical utility.

Prayer is the last topic on which we shall touch, and it must be briefly. On this subject, above all others, instruction is needed; for prayer is the very breathing of the Christian soul, without which the spiritual life cannot be kept up; and, being a duty of such infinite importance, it is most needful to learn how it can be most acceptably performed. Now, on this subject the instructions afforded by the Church are inexhaustible; they are of all measures, and fitted for all spiritual statures, from the little, simple notices afforded in the Catechism for children, and such as are like children in these matters, to the deep mystical treatises written by ascetics and contemplatives for such as aspire to follow in their track. Prayer, in the Catholic Church, may be as systematically studied as any science of this world has ever been by its most earnest votaries, or rather much more so; for more in number, and more various in their birth and country and circumstances, have been the students of this science than of any other and the fruit of their labors abides for our ben-

efit, that we may take of it according to our degree and our needs. Even the simplest among us are taught somewhat scientifically in this matter; for instance, we all know what is vocal and what mental prayer, and what devotions combine the two; what manner of prayer is best suited for the various occasions which ordinarily present themselves: thus an offering up of the day is the prayer prescribed for our first awaking; an act of contrition, for the close of the day: and of preparation for death, as our last at night. We are taught also how to make every action of the day a prayer, and various other matters too long here to enumerate, but of great personal concernment and utility to every one of us. But last of all, and crowning every other manner of instruction on all these various subjects, comes the practice inculcated by the Church on all her children who desire to lead holy lives, of daily meditation. She desires to impress on our minds not merely the abstract doctrines and external facts of the Gospel, but to teach us how to penetrate into their hidden marrow and spirit. And this she does both by the almost countless multitude of spiritual books, grounded on various parts of Scripture, which she offers us; and also, and
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more especially, by this practice of meditation, the adoption of which we are taught is the first and most important step in the spiritual life. To this duty we are recommended to give daily the first hour we can command in the morning, that we may come to it with our thoughts fresh and our energies unbroken; we are directed to persevere in it for a specific portion of time, say half an hour, or less for beginners and such as have no leisure, and to allow nothing but absolute necessity to interrupt it. This is, in fact, the main duty of our day; and if this is well performed, the others, we may hope, following in their regular course, will be well performed also. Now, of this meditation, which is made such a point of in Catholic life, the subject-matter is almost always taken from Holy Scripture; every action of our Blessed Lord which is there recorded, every sacred word He spoke, every pang He suffered (so far as mortal mind can grasp these things), has been in turn the theme of intense, adoring contemplation; the seven wounds, the seven last words on the cross, the seven outpourings of His sacred blood, the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, His miracles, His parables, His calling of His Apostles, every clause in His sermon on

the Mount, have been dwelt on in turn with an earnestness which would have drained them of their meaning if it were not unfathomable because divine. Many saints have spent almost their entire lives, we may say, in meditation on these inexhaustible subjects; and often the result of these meditations has been preserved and handed down by the Church for the assistance of her feebler children.

Meditation, we have said, is recommended to us as a daily practice; but we are further recommended to devote ourselves to it at certain times and seasons with especial fervor. We are advised sometimes to enter into what is called a retreat; that is, to lay aside for a while all the cares of the world, to subject ourselves to a rule of solitude and silence, and to pursue a course of meditations on a regular series of subjects which are laid down for us, and proposed and expounded to us in turn from day to day. Public retreats of a similar kind, or missions as they are called, are given from time to time for the benefit of the mass of the people, who have not the opportunity of retiring into religious houses for the purpose. These spiritual exercises embrace the most important truths contained in Holy Scripture: first the end of

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our being, the right use of creatures towards the fulfilment of that end, the disturbing force which tends to move us from it, and the means of repelling that force ; then the Master whom we are called to obey is brought before our minds ; we are led through every stage of His blessed life, passion, and death ; then we are taught to rejoice in His glorious resurrection ; and finally, to rise to the contemplation of the love of God, the one great absorbing truth which breathes through every page of Scripture, and in which all others begin and end.

This has been but a brief and hurried sketch of the various means employed by the Church to instruct her children in the wisdom of God, of which His holy book is the great treasure-house ; and we defy any of the sects which have torn themselves from her to supply their followers with helps at all approaching to these, either in number or efficiency. In truth, however others may cavil and dispute, Catholics know and feel that Holy Scripture is the peculiar heritage of the Church ; the Church alone has preserved it, she alone bears witness to its inspiration, she alone has the key to its true meaning, and she alone knows how to dispense it to us according to our needs, and to instruct

us aright in all that sacred wisdom which forms the subject-matter of its pages. Those who have grown up out of her pale, and have returned to it in mature age, and with developed faculties, have felt that of all the blessings she has bestowed upon them, this of a true knowledge and right understanding of Holy Scripture is not the least. The identity of the present living Church with that of which the New Testament recounts the infant struggles, strikes home upon the heart and mind of a convert with a force not to be described. "I seem," said one convert, "to have been transplanted into the Acts of the Apostles." "Ever since I have been a Catholic," said another, "every line of Scripture has seemed to me like a letter from home." Would that any thing that has been written in this series of Tracts on the various relations between the Church and Holy Scripture, of which this is the conclusion, could induce any single individual to make trial for himself in this matter; to investigate the subject with real care and impartiality; to sift the grounds of his own belief, and examine the authority which supports ours; and, more especially, to look into some of the practical and devotional works on Holy Scripture in which

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the Catholic Church so richly abounds, and try whether they do not throw on the sacred text a light so pure, so beautiful, so unmistakably true, as to bear witness to the presence in the Church of the same Holy Spirit by which that sacred text was inspired.

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PROTESTANTISM
WEIGHED IN ITS OWN BALANCE
AND
FOUND WANTING.

THE CHURCH.



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PROTESTANTISM WEIGHED IN ITS OWN BALANCE, AND FOUND WANTING.

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In examining the famous watchword of Protestants,—the Bible and the Bible only,—we pointed out how much more careful they were to reject every thing that is *not* contained in the Bible than to receive every thing that *is* contained there; and, in fact, it may be truly said that Protestantism consists much more in denying than in affirming.

It is far easier, as every one knows, to pull down and to destroy than to build and set up; and so, in the same way, it is far more easy, beyond all comparison, to deny a thing than to affirm, prove, and establish the same. Hence, if we look carefully at all that was done by the so-called “Reformers” of the sixteenth century, we shall see that they entirely confined themselves to that which is more

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easy ; they pulled down and destroyed the abbeys, monasteries, churches, and altars which Catholics had built, and they rejected and denied in Christian doctrine what Catholics had always published and maintained ; but they did no more than this. They took away from the Christian world much of what it had before, but were at no pains to put any thing else in the place of what they took away.

We see this very clearly when we come to examine into Protestant doctrine ; for it is almost impossible to get at a distinct positive notion of it upon any subject whatever. It is very easy to say what it is *not*, but extremely difficult to say what it *is*. It is *not* the Catholic doctrine ; and that is all that can be ascertained about it. The good and wise Sir Thomas More, who was chancellor of England when Protestantism was just in its infancy, has well ridiculed this peculiarity of the new heresy in his own quaint way. He says, “Now-a-days there are almost as many sects as there are men, and not one agreeth with the other. Hence, to try and learn the right way of them, is much the same as if a man, walking in a deep forest, would fain find the way to the town for which he is making, and

inquire of a parcel of lewd, mocking knaves, who, when the bewildered man had prayed them to tell him the way, should get them into a circle, turning themselves back to back, and then speaking all at once, should each one cry, ‘This way!’ pointing with his finger in the direction of his nose.” They all agree in turning their backs upon the Church, in denying and rejecting the ancient Catholic faith; but when they come to speak for themselves, they are quite at a loss; they know not what to say; they speak at random, so that one man says one thing, and another another; nay, that very same person says one thing to-day, and quite another thing to-morrow.

Such is the general condition of Protestantism on all matters of Christian doctrine. But there is one subject in which this endless confusion and uncertainty and contradiction is even more glaringly exhibited than on any other; I mean, the subject of the Church. Ask a Protestant to define his notion of the Church, to say what it is, who is in it, and who is out of it, and you will find that he is wholly unable to give you a plain, intelligible, and consistent answer. And yet Protestants profess to go by the Bible; and the Bible says

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a good deal about the Church in one place or another ; and what it says sounds very grave and solemn too, and very important, so that one would have thought Protestants would feel it absolutely necessary to have *some* doctrine upon the subject. For instance, only to mention two texts out of many : the Protestant reads in his Bible, (Acts, ii. 47,) that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved;" and again he reads, (1 Tim. iii. 15), that "the Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth." Now these words, being part of the written Word of God, certainly demand the most serious attention of Protestants, who profess to be guided by that Word in all things. For if "such as shall be saved are added daily to the Church," and if eternal salvation be a matter of importance, it must be of the same importance to ascertain what the Church is, and where it may be found; or again, if "the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth," and if, in order that we may be saved, it is necessary that we hold the truth as it has been revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, it is of course absolutely necessary to our salvation that we give heed to what the Church says.

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Yet Protestants in general have, as I have said, no doctrine about the Church: they do not care to have a plain answer ready for all such as may put to them this plain question, What is that body which Scripture calls the Church, and of which it says so many and such glorious things? The great majority of Protestants consider that our Lord came down upon earth to deliver a doctrine, or set of doctrines, but founded no institution whatever for the continual preservation of those doctrines; others again, amongst those who profess the established religion of England, are of opinion that He founded a Church at the first, and made very special promises to it, and that it really was perhaps of a while the pillar and ground of the truth, but that this gracious purpose of our Lord was afterwards frustrated by the sin of man; that the fulfilment of His promises was made to depend upon certain conditions, which conditions not having been observed, the promises themselves have failed and come to naught. These are the two most popular notions upon the subject generally prevalent amongst Protestants, and neither of them can properly be called a religious doctrine. Persons who entertain such opinions may indeed venerate

ate the memory of the ancient Church, or even profess some degree of respect and consideration for whatever they may be pleased to call the Church at the present day; perhaps they really do set a high value upon the Church as a "despository of historical matter, or a witness of past ages;" yet, since they do not look upon her now, in the nineteenth century, as the oracle of the Most High, the pillar and ground of the truth, they cannot be said to have any *religious* doctrine about her; they may have their own notions or private opinions about her, just as they have about any other great public institution, whether of past or present times; but she does not in any real way form a part of their religious creed, though they still repeat with their lips, "I believe in one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church."

On the other hand, the Catholic doctrine upon this subject is clear and positive and consistent, just as upon every other article of the creed. Catholics believe that Christ set up a Church, or visible body upon earth, with the Apostles for its rulers, and Peter, the chief of the Apostles, for its head, and all Christian people for its members; that He endowed it with certain high and supernatural privileges, and appointed it to

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be the depository of His truth, and the minister of His grace to all mankind; moreover, that this Church, thus founded and established, will never, as long as the world lasts, be brought to an end; and, that in any matter of faith or morals, that is, in any thing that she may declare respecting Christian doctrines to be believed or Christian duties to be fulfilled, she can never fall into error. Every one can see at once that this doctrine is at least clear, distinct, and positive; it is also consistent, each part thoroughly agrees with every other part. For if the Church be indeed the divinely-appointed teacher of mankind, it follows as a matter of course that she must be intended to last as long as the world lasts, otherwise, mankind would be left at some future time without a teacher; of course also she must be preserved from falling into error, for a divinely-appointed teacher teaching what is false is a contradiction of all our ideas of God, whom we believe and know to be the very Truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

This, then, is a plain and simple account of what was universally believed three or four hundred years ago to be the true nature of that body which is spoken of in Holy Scripture and

in the Creeds under the name of the Church. At that time, however, there rose up certain persons who taught something very different on this subject; and this new teaching has generally prevailed in England ever since. Now both those who introduced it at the first, and those who maintain it now, profess to be guided by the Bible and the Bible only in all the details of their religious belief; and yet one can scarcely imagine a stronger contrast than there is, at first sight at least, between the language of these so-called Reformers and the language of the Bible. For instance, our Lord had distinctly said, (St. Matt. xvi. 18,) "I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Protestant preachers of the sixteenth century did not hesitate to affirm, that "for the space of the last eight hundred years and more, the whole Christian world, laity and clergy, learned and unlearned, all ages, sects, and degrees of men, women, and children, had been all together drowned in abominable idolatry," and that the only body then in existence claiming to be Christ's Church, and known and recognized by that name, was in fact the kingdom of Antichrist; that Christ's Church was in truth nowhere to be seen at that

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moment upon earth, but would presently be restored by themselves. Again, Christ said, (St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20), "Go teach all nations . . . and lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world;" and (St. John xiv. 16, 17,) "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth;" but now the Reformers said that the successors of the Apostles, the pastors and ministers of the Church, were "the authors of all error, ignorance, blindness, hypocrisy, and idolatry," and that the religion then professed by the whole Christian world under their guidance was nothing more than a gross superstition and an apostasy. Once more, it was written in the Bible that "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved:" it was preached by the Reformers that to belong to the communion of the Church was "to ride to the devil with idolaters." Lastly, whereas St. Paul called the Church "the house of God," (1 Tim. iii. 15,) Cranmer, Latimer, and the rest, called it "the cursed synagogue of Satan."

I know, indeed, that these men would not have acknowledged that the Church against which they brought such railing accusations

was the same as that spoken of by our Lord and His Apostles. Of course not; for this would have been at once to declare their own condemnation. Nevertheless the stubborn fact remains, that whereas the Bible speaks distinctly of a Church which our Lord would build, and which should last for ever, there was at the time of the Reformation a certain society which claimed to be that Church; moreover, that whatever other things were spoken about the Church, either in the Old Testament or in the New, this society unhesitatingly appropriated to itself; and (which is the main point) that there was no rival society making a similar claim. When, therefore, the Reformers thus raved and blasphemed against the only society in existence which either claimed for itself, or had conceded to it by others, the name and attributes of the Church as described in the sacred writings, it is not easy to see how they proposed to make good their case by an appeal to that only standard which they allowed, viz., those very writings themselves. And, indeed, their attempts to reconcile their teaching upon this point with the teaching of Holy Writ were clumsy and awkward enough. "When I tell him"—says

Sir Thomas More, speaking of one of these new teachers—"when I tell him of Christ's promise that he would leave behind Him a spouse, His Church, without spot or wrinkle, and yet that according to his teaching it would appear otherwise, he equivocates, he scuds in and out like a hare with a dozen brace of greyhounds after her; and finally he slinks slyly away by saying that the Church ever had spots and wrinkles of sin, and yet for all that the Church of Christ is very pure and clean, because abiding in the knowledge of her spots and wrinkles, and asking mercy for them, God layeth none of them to her charge. I know not what to make of a Church pure and clean, and yet with spots and wrinkles both. He might as well have told us, that if there were a woman with a crooked nose, yet as long as no man tell her of it, so long her nose stood straight."

You may think this perhaps an exaggerated specimen of the shifts and quibbles whereby these men attempted to explain away the declarations of the Bible respecting the Church; but the truth is, that those declarations are so precise and positive, that it requires no little ingenuity to escape from them; and if the

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arguments which the Protestants use upon the same subject at the present day do not exhibit the same manifest absurdities, it is because they have invented a theory, more plausible indeed, but certainly not a whit more true or more scriptural.

This theory may be briefly stated thus: that the Church of which such glorious things were spoken by the prophets, by our blessed Lord, and by His Apostles, was not a visible, but an invisible society; not a mixed company of good and bad men living together in the enjoyment of certain privileges bound by the same laws and obeying the same head, but rather the secret company of the elect, scattered here and there all over the world; unknown to one another and to the rest of mankind, but known to God alone. Such is the ordinary notion of the Church which prevails at the present among Protestants; yet surely a more violent perversion of the plain words of Scripture can scarcely be imagined.

For consider, first, the words of our Lord. The Gospels, indeed, contain but two passages in which He spoke of His Church under this name; and although our adversaries will not

admit that in the first of these passages—that wherein He declares His purpose of building His Church, and promises that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it—any thing is revealed to us concerning its nature, whether it was to be visible or invisible, yet it is not so easy for them to evade the force of the second. Our Lord is giving His disciples certain practical directions with reference to their behavior under certain circumstances, and He says, “If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear them, tell the Church: and if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican,” (St. Matt. xvii. 15–17.) Here, then, the Church is clearly set before us as a society having authority distinct from any authority belonging to individuals, whether one or many; for first there was to be a private admonition or rebuke by a single individual; then by “one or two more,” still having no authority to pronounce a judicial sentence; then, lastly, there was to

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be an appeal to the Church ; and this Church, in whatever way it was to be constituted, must needs have been a visible body, since it was to have real authority even in this world, and a sentence pronounced by it was to affect the social condition of those whom it concerned ; a person censured or condemned by the Church was to be treated henceforth as the heathen ; that is, he was no longer to be looked upon as a Christian or a member of the kingdom of heaven. And our Lord immediately goes on to add that most solemn consideration, namely, that this sentence of the Church upon earth should be ratified in heaven : “Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven ; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven,” (ver. 18.)

This, then, as I have said, is a passage in which our Lord has revealed to us something about the nature of His Church, calling it by its own name of Church ; and you see how contrary it is to the Protestant notion of the Church, as already explained. And if we turn to other passages in which our Lord speaks of the Church under other names or titles, the result will be the same. Thus—

only to mention a single instance—nobody doubts but that the long and solemn prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John was in fact a prayer for the Church. Whether we look upon the Church as the whole visible society of professing Christians, or as the elect only, at least we shall not refuse to identify them with those for whom our Lord prayed: “Not for these only do I pray, but *for them also who through their word shall believe in Me*,” (ver. 20.) And what is it that He prays for them? “That they all may be one, as Thou Father in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, *that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me*; that they may be made perfect in one, and *the world may know that Thou hast sent Me*, and hast loved them, as Thou hast also loved Me.” The unity of the Church, then, was to be a token to the world of the divine mission of our Saviour; but how could the world be made to recognize this property of a body which it could not see? How could the unity of an invisible body be itself visible, and a token, a very important token, to others?

And if we turn from the Gospels to the

Epistles, from the words of our Lord to the words of His Apostles, or, again, from the New Testament to the Old, from the Apostles to the prophets, it is always the same idea of the Church continually set before us. It is the body of Christ, into which all Christians are incorporated by the sacrament of Baptism, (Eph. i. 23; 1 Cor. xii. 13;) it is the house of God, in which are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some indeed unto honor, but some unto dishonor, (1 Tim. iii. 15; 2 Tim. ii. 20;) it is the house of the God of Jacob, prepared on the top of mountains, and exalted high above the hills, unto which all nations should flow, (Isa. ii. 2,) reminding us of our Lord's own words, "A city seated on a mountain that cannot be hid," (St. Matt. v. 14;) it is a rich habitation which our eyes shall see; a tabernacle that cannot be removed; a straight way, so that fools shall not err therein, (Isa. xxx. 20; xxxiii. 20; xxxv. 8;) in a word, it is scarcely possible to quote a single passage of Holy Writ which speaks of the Church at all, which does not describe it more or less distinctly as a visible body, invested with invisible privileges; a treasury and channel

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of spiritual blessings to mankind, yet itself made up of good members and of bad ; and above all, as a body that might be easily known and recognized, just like any other external object, so that a plain and simple person could not fail to discover it.

Without entering, however, on a particular examination of these texts in detail, every one of which is contradicted or made to have no sense at all by the theories of Protestantism, it will be enough for our purpose to look at the matter from another point of view, and to make a brief statement of facts, that must be admitted on all sides.

Every one who receives the Bible as the word of God must believe that our Lord appointed certain persons to teach His doctrine to the rest of mankind : "Go and teach all nations, . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He must acknowledge, also, that to these teachers was committed the authority of ordaining others to assist and to succeed to themselves ; for the election of Matthias to supply the place of Judas, and the ordination of Saul and Barnabas, are clear instances of the exercise of this authority. He must still further

admit that the persons thus appointed to assist and to succeed to the Apostles received a commission themselves also to appoint others to come after them; for St. Paul writes to "his dearly beloved son," Timothy, whom he had himself so appointed or ordained, (2 Tim. i. 6,) "the things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also," (2 Tim. ii. 2;) and he bids him be cautious and prudent in his choice of persons to whom to commit this sacred trust: "Impose not hands lightly upon any man," (1 Tim. v. 22.) And yet once more, he cannot refuse to acknowledge that these persons were appointed, not only to *teach* others, but also, in a certain real sense, to *rule* and govern them. They are not only called prophets and doctors, that is, teachers, (Acts, xiii. 1; 1 Cor. xii. 28,) but also "prelates," or governors having rule over the faithful, (Heb. xiii. 7, 17; 1 Thess. v. 12,) and "bishops," or overseers, appointed by the Holy Ghost to rule the Church of God, (Acts, xx. 28); and this was so essential a feature of their character, that if a man did not know how to rule his own house, this was a sufficient reason for not making him one of these bishops,

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because he would not be "able to take care of the Church of God," (1 Tim. iii. 5;) indeed, their rule over the Church was such, that St. Peter thought it not unnecessary to caution them against "lording it" over those intrusted to their care, (1 Pet. v. 3;) and as a necessary consequence of this authority in the clergy, the people were required to "obey and be subject to them," (Heb. xiii. 17.)

Here, then, we have three or four links of a very important chain; a succession of persons divinely commissioned to teach the truths of religion to the rest of mankind, and to govern in all spiritual matters such persons as might be persuaded to embrace that religion.

When did this chain end? This is the question which Protestants have to answer, and to answer out of Holy Scripture; or, if this is too much to expect upon what is in some sort an historical question, they ought at least to be able to show out of Holy Scripture that it *was* to come to an end some day or other; that it *was* a merely temporary ordinance, and not intended to last for ever. But this is just what they cannot do. They may be clever enough at raising difficulties and specious objections against this or that Catholic doc-

trine; but they are utterly unable to establish this doctrine so necessary for the support of their own system, that the succession of divinely-appointed teachers was to be broken, and the Church to come to an end. They may invent ingenious interpretations of this or that particular text which speaks of the Church, and, having thus explained away its obvious meaning, urge this as a proof that the obvious meaning is false; but they cannot support by any shadow of scriptural authority the remarkable difference, which is so plain to every body, between their own religious system and the religious system of apostolic times, as exhibited to us in those very writings, which alone (they say) should guide us in such matters: in the religious system of apostolic times, the Church was the guide and teacher of mankind; in the religious system of Protestants, she is just nothing at all. They cannot deny but that the Church, as spoken of by our Lord and by His Apostles, meant a certain visible body then in existence, well defined, and easily recognized; that this body, like our own natural body, to which it is so frequently compared by St. Paul, consists of different members, each mem-

ber exercising different functions ; that it has therefore a head to govern, a mouth to speak, and hands and feet to execute ; or, to speak more generally, that it is at least made up of two principal parts, one whose duty it is to rule and to teach, the other whose duty it is to obey and believe whatever is thus taught and commanded ;—all this, I say, Protestants cannot pretend to deny about the Church as it was at the time when the several books of the New Testament were written : nevertheless, professing strict obedience to the Bible, they are not afraid to apply all the promises and other declarations of that Book concerning this visible Church to another, an invisible body, which can neither be defined nor recognized, the object of faith, not of sight ; a body, whose members have not different spiritual relations one to another, so that one should command and the other obey, the one should teach and the other be taught ; but, on the contrary, all stand in the same relation to Christ and to one another, all have one and the same duty to perform, viz., to read the Word of God, to believe and to practise it. So then, just as I showed on a former occasion that Protestants apply to the Bible, or the

written Word of God, declarations and promises which (as they must themselves acknowledge) were originally spoken concerning the Word of God, preached by the Apostles, that is, concerning the teaching of divinely-appointed ministers; so here, precisely in the same way, they apply to a secret invisible body declarations and promises which (as they must themselves acknowledge) were originally spoken of a public and visible one; and in this way, whilst professing not to reject any portion of Holy Scripture, and even making a great boast of following nothing else excepting Holy Scripture, they really make it say just what they please, by affixing their own arbitrary interpretation upon its language.

The sum and substance, then, of what we have said may be briefly stated thus. Protestants bid us read the Bible, and learn from thence all that we are to believe about the religion taught by Jesus Christ. We take them at their word; we open our Bibles, and read there that Christ appointed certain men to teach others in His stead and by His authority; that those who were thus appointed by Christ gave the same commission to others,

and desired them again to hand it on in like manner to others; that the very end and purpose of this appointment, the reason wherefore "Christ gave these apostles, and prophets, and pastors, and teachers," was this, that "henceforth we might be no more children, tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine," but might all come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God; moreover, that these teachers exercised authority over their disciples, over those whom they converted, in such a way that the Christian believers formed a visible community, distinct from other persons, and were, in fact, a body corporate by themselves, with certain laws and privileges of their own, and their own rulers. We think it not unlikely that this system of things, having been appointed by Christ Himself, should have been intended to continue; it certainly *did* continue up to the time when the latest portion of Holy Scripture was written; and, as far as we can learn from those sacred records, these were the means by which Christ intended that His religion should be propagated for ever, even to the end of the world; we expect, therefore, to find such a body of men still existing at the present day, teach-

ing and ruling the flock of Christ, and we turn to our Protestant instructor, begging him to tell us where they may be found: but we ask in vain; he says that there is no longer any necessity for such a body; that the altered circumstances of the times, the extensive diffusion of the Scriptures, and other causes, have rendered it practically useless, and therefore it has been superseded: and that all this is quite certain, though the Bible, the only standard of truth, has not said a word about it.

Have we not a reason then for that assertion which we have already made, and which we now repeat, that *whilst Protestants pretend to follow the Bible, in truth they make the Bible follow them?* Surely this is most evident in the present case; for whereas they cannot deny but that there was once upon earth a visible body of men called the Church, and that this body was once the appointed guide and means whereby men were to be taught the truths of the Christian religion, and whereas they constantly profess that men can only be required to believe that which the written Word of God expressly declares, nevertheless they do not hesitate to demand our assent—and that upon their own bare word, without so much as a

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single text of Scripture to support them—to one or other of these propositions; either that this body has ceased to exist altogether, or that, if it still continue to exist, yet it has certainly been divested of all its prerogatives. But if the Bible is to be indeed our teacher, and not a mere puppet in our hands, made to speak according to the devices of our own hearts, and not according to the mind of the Holy Spirit, surely an obligation, concerning which it is clear from the language of Scripture that it once existed, and it cannot be shown from the same authority that it has ever been abolished, remains even at the present day in full and undiminished force. Now it is plain that there was once an obligation upon all mankind to hear the Church and to obey its pastors and rulers; and it is no less plain that nothing can be alleged from the Word of God to take away that obligation: to those, therefore, who recognize no other authority in controversies of faith but the Bible only, this obligation is as much in force now as it was in the days of the Apostles themselves, before a single word of the Bible had ever been written.

And this argument becomes still more cogent and unanswerable, if we take into consideration this plain matter of fact, so manifest to every

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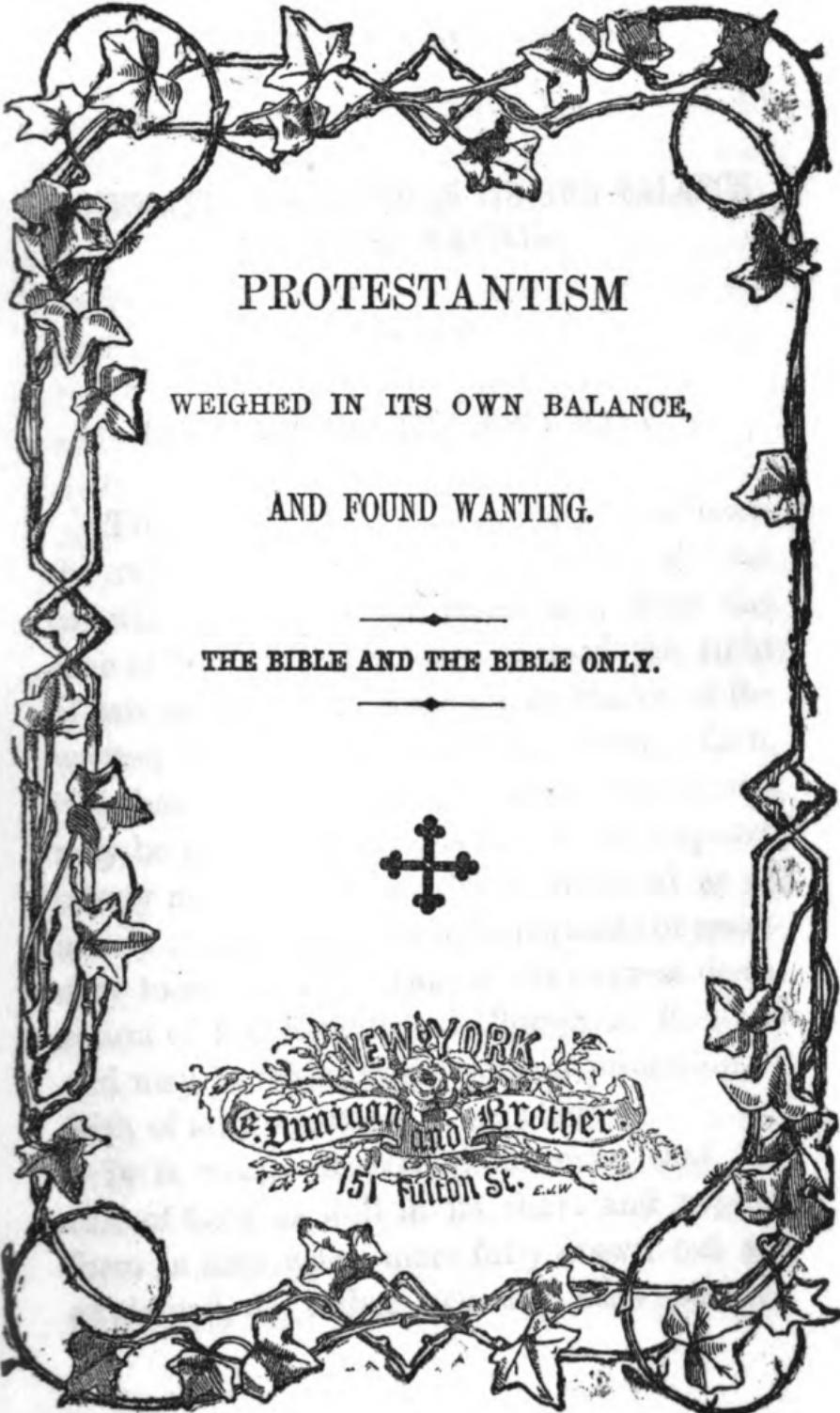
one of us, that all this while there stands in the midst of us a body that does not hesitate to proclaim herself the very one spoken of by our Lord and His Apostles ; a body which certainly did not spring into being to-day, nor yesterday, nor the day before, but which is known and acknowledged to be a continuation of one that existed in the age before us, and then again in the age before that, and so on backwards and backwards, till we come to the age of the Apostles themselves ; a body which has all this time claimed to be the sole judge in controversies of faith, even as though she were the pillar and ground of the truth and had received some special promise that the Spirit of truth should guide her into all truth ; a body which claims the obedience of all baptized persons, as though they were her children, and always speaks and acts in the name and with the authority of Jesus Christ, as though He had promised to be always with her and to ratify her deeds ; in a word, a body which claims to be the sole teacher of Christ's truth, the sole dispenser of His gifts, and, in fact, His very representative upon earth, so that "he that heareth her heareth Christ, and he that despiseth her despiseth Christ." Such a body we seem to read of in

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Holy Scripture; and such a body still exists in the world, and exists too without a rival; there is no other body which makes a similar claim. Why, then, do persons refuse to receive her testimony in matters of Christian doctrine? Because they say that it is contrary to the teaching of Holy Scripture. But how can they show from Holy Scripture that such a contradiction between the teaching of the Church and of the Bible could ever be possible? Is it not more likely that they are themselves mistaken as to what the teaching of the Bible, or of the Church, or still more probably both of one and of the other, really is?

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PROTESTANTISM WEIGHED IN ITS OWN BALANCE, AND FOUND WANTING.

THE BIBLE AND THE BIBLE ONLY.

"THE Bible and the Bible only" has been the rallying cry and watchword of all the countless sects of Protestants who from the time of Martin Luther have claimed the right of private judgment in the interpretation of the written Word of God. It is their rule of faith, "so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." This is the express declaration of the Established Church in England and may be taken as the general profession of faith of all Protestants everywhere

It is worth observing, however, that this rule of faith, as well in its short and popular form as also when more fully drawn out and explained, is rather negative than positive.

Those who use it are more careful to say what they do *not* hold than what they *do*; they insist upon "the Bible *only*," to the exclusion of every thing else, but they are not equally jealous about receiving the *whole* Bible—every part of it. They say that nothing is to be required of any man that it should be believed which is not to be found in the Bible, or at least may not be proved thereby; but they do not with equal distinctness insist upon the duty of believing every thing which *is* read in that sacred book, or *may be* proved by it.

This is no idle assertion; it is a plain matter of fact, which may be justly charged against all Protestants, of whatever denomination, all over the world, that they do not really receive the whole of the Bible, that is, do not really receive every thing which it contains. I am not now speaking of their rejection of those books which they call Apocryphal, but which are received by Catholics as part of the written Word of God; nor am I speaking of such bold and impious rejection of parts of Holy Scripture as has been ventured upon by Luther and some others. That arch-reformer of the Church would fain have reformed the Bible

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also; he said of the book of Esther that he was such an enemy to it, he would it did not exist —he would toss it into the Elbe; of the book of Jonah, that the history which it contained was so monstrous that it was absolutely incredible; of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that it was not written by an Apostle, and therefore it was not to be wondered at that it should contain some mixture of wood, straw, and hay; of the Epistle of St. James, that it was worthless, an epistle of straw; and lastly of the Apocalypse (or Revelation) of St. John, that much was wanting to persuade him that it was scriptural.

But I repeat, I am not now speaking of open and avowed rejection of whole books of the Bible such as this; I am speaking of the way in which Protestants in general treat several portions even of the Old and New Testament which they profess to receive—indeed, which all Christians agree in receiving—as divinely inspired: and I say that there are many texts even there which they do not really receive; some which are to them as an unknown tongue, without any meaning at all, and which they therefore make no use of whatever; others which seem to be opposed to their own creed,

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and which they therefore try to escape from and to explain away; lastly, there are others which they even boldly contradict.

In the following pages a few of the most striking of these texts shall be brought forward, arranged in order according to the subjects to which they belong, and compared, as briefly as possible, with the Protestant doctrine upon the same subjects. We will begin with what is obviously the most important, the rule of faith; having first explained, however, in a few words, both what is meant by this phrase, and also why this subject is so very important as to deserve the first place.

All Christians are agreed that the Son of God came down from heaven to teach mankind the will of His Father, and that those who wish to be saved must be very careful to know and to do that will. How, then, can we know for certain what that will is? In other words, how has our Lord Jesus Christ taken care that we, who live more than eighteen hundred years after He went back to heaven, and those too that shall come after us even to the end of the world,—how has He taken care that we shall all know for certain, and without a mistake, every thing which He taught, and which

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we must do and believe, according to His doctrine, to gain everlasting life?

If you ask this question of a Protestant, he will tell you that our Lord took care to have it all written down very clearly and distinctly in a book, which book is called the Bible; so that any one who wishes to know what he must do and believe in order that he may be saved, has nothing to do but to go and read, in that book, and he will be sure to learn. If you ask the same question of a Catholic, however, he will tell you that our Lord chose certain persons whom he carefully instructed in all that concerned the kingdom of God, and to whom He gave a commission to teach the rest of mankind; that these persons were to appoint others to assist and to succeed them; and that our Lord promised, as well to those persons whom He had selected as also to their successors for ever, that He would be with them always to the end of the world; so that any one who wishes to know what he must do and believe in order that he may be saved, must go to those whom Jesus appointed to teach, and in this way he will be sure to learn. You see at once that there is a great difference between these two answers; the one refers us

to a book, the other to a living body of men ; the one refers us to the Bible, the other to the Church. You see also that this difference lies at the very foundation of the controversy between Catholics and Protestants, so that there is no use in discussing minor questions of detail until this main point has first been settled ; indeed, one might almost say that there is no use in discussing minor questions of detail at all, because they are, in fact, all wrapt up and included in this one main question, Whether God intended the Scriptures to be the only guide and teacher of mankind in matters of religion ? For if He did, then of course the Catholic Church is in error, since she denies this, and teaches the contrary ; nay more, she is altogether false and an impostor, for she claims to be God's messenger upon earth, authorized to teach mankind all things that they ought to know and to do for their soul's health ; whereas if this doctrine be true, there is no such messenger anywhere, but only a message written in a book which every body has a right, and is even bound, to read and understand for himself. If, on the other hand, God did *not* intend the Bible to be man's only guide and teacher in matters of religion, but

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appointed His Church for this very purpose that she should fulfil this office, and promised her His guidance, so that she should never be deceived in proposing any thing to our belief that was not true and had not been revealed by Him, then, of course, not only is the Catholic Church right upon this point, but also of necessity right upon every other point also.

Our present purpose, however, is not to establish the truth of this Catholic doctrine, nor, indeed, of any other Catholic doctrine whatever, but simply to demonstrate the falsehood of the Protestant doctrine by means of an appeal to its own standard, the Bible and the Bible only; we propose to show, that he who really receives the written Word of God as the only rule of faith, is by that very rule bound to receive something more which no Protestant is content to receive; that Protestants do not and cannot, as long as they remain Protestants, make use of the whole of the Bible, but only of certain parts of it; that though they may profess to believe it all, yet in point of fact they act as though they only believed a part of it; that though they may be continually declaring with their lips that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,"

yet meanwhile they declare still more effectually by their creed and practice that they consider a good deal to be of no profit at all in the present age, or at least not for themselves.

First, then, upon this very fundamental question of the rule of faith itself, we say that Protestants practically set at naught and deny much that the Bible tells them. Let us see, for example, how they handle the following texts: first, words spoken by our blessed Lord Himself; secondly, words spoken by His Apostles.

I. THE TESTIMONY OF OUR LORD.

What says the Word of God?

1. *St. Matthew*, xxviii. 19,
20. Jesus came and spake unto His Apostles, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

What says the Protestant?

1. Our Lord made use of frail, fallible men to preach His holy Gospel, and to teach all nations at the first; and He promised to be with them, that is, to help and strengthen them in a very special manner, for that purpose. But it was not His intention that this should continue for ever, even unto the end of the world; on the contrary, He intended to withdraw this special guidance and assistance at some future period,

* The Protestant translation is of course made use of in all these passages.

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2. *St. John, xx. 21, 22.* Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.

3. *St. John, xvii. 18, 20.* As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.

4. *St. Luke, x. 16.* He that heareth you heareth Me; and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me.

5. *St. Matthew, xviii. 17.* If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican.

if not from the Apostles themselves, at least from their successors, as soon as the Bible should be written or printed; and then, from that time forward, His promised presence would be no longer with the *preachers* of the Gospel as it had hitherto been, but with the book in which the Gospel was written.

2. There is therefore nobody now upon earth sent by Jesus Christ, in the same way as Jesus had been sent by the Father:

3. Neither is there any body through whose word persons are now called upon by God to believe in Christ;

4. Nor any body who so represents our Lord here upon earth, as that those who despise his teaching are in fact despising the teaching of our Lord himself;

5. Nor is there any Church, or body of men, whom persons are bound to hear and obey in matters of religion.

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II. THE TESTIMONY OF HIS APOSTLES.

What says the Word of God?

1. 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us.

Ib. ii. 2. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

2. 1 Cor. xi. 16. If any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God.

3. 1 John, iv. 1, 6. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out in the world. We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

What says the Protestant?

1. At the time when St. Paul gave this charge to Timothy, the only means of spreading the knowledge of the Gospel was for one man to teach another; this, however, being a most unsafe method, and liable to all kinds of abuse, was merely a temporary arrangement, until the whole truth should have been committed to writing. Henceforward no man would be trustworthy or faithful in this matter, and fit to teach others; but all would have to learn out of one common book.

2. So, in like manner, it was very well for the Apostles to propose themselves, and the custom of the Churches, as a standard of truth;

3. And to give as a test, or means of distinguishing false teachers from true ones, their obedience or disobedience to the living pastors of the Church; but this also was merely temporary. As soon as the Scriptures should be written and collected in a single volume, these, and these only, were to be the true test and standard by which each man should try for himself whether or no

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4. 2 Thess. ii. 15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle.

1 Cor. xi. 2. Keep the traditions* as I delivered them to you.

the doctrines proposed to his belief came from God.

4. St. Paul had a perfect right to call on his converts to receive all the traditions which they had learned, whether written or unwritten; and they were bound to obey him. But those unwritten traditions, at least as much of them as it was important for us to know, were afterwards written, and are to be found in the later portions of the New Testament.

These are only a few of the most simple and striking passages of Scripture which bear upon the subject before us; and see how completely the Protestant sets them aside and explains them away by means of this very clever excuse, that they had only a temporary use and meaning, that they belonged to a state of things which was soon to pass away, or, at any rate, which has certainly long since come to an end; whilst yet he cannot pretend to allege a single passage of Holy Scripture in which we are told that this great change, or indeed that any change at all in the mode of teaching the Gospel was ever to be made even

* In the Protestant translation, "ordinances;" but as in the original it is the very same word as in the previous text, I have used the same English word also.

to the end of the world ; so that, whilst professing to go by the Bible and *the Bible only*, he is obliged to have recourse to *something not in the Bible* to support this fundamental principle of his own creed.

The Protestant professes that the only sure way of knowing God's will is for every man to read the Holy Scriptures for himself. I take up the Holy Scriptures, therefore, for this purpose, and I find there that our Lord appointed, and the Apostles practised, quite another way of learning God's will and the right road to heaven. I find that our Lord sent not a message but messengers, not a book for men to read but Apostles for men to obey ; and, in like manner, I find that the Apostles too say not a word about the necessity of not believing any thing that is not written in a certain book, but, on the contrary, that they distinctly say, " Believe all that you have been taught, whether written or unwritten." I turn, then, to the Protestant, and ask for an explanation of these things, and he says, Obey the Bible, and the Bible only ; but be careful not to obey every word of it, for though the Bible says nothing about it, yet it is quite certain that some portions of it were never intended for you, and do

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not refer to the present generation. In other words, Believe the Bible and *the Bible only*, but believe *also* what I tell you about certain parts of it.

It may be objected, however, that, after all, this is not a fair statement of the case, for that there are other texts of the Bible which seem to speak very plainly on the Protestant side of the question, and that the Catholic is obliged to disregard these quite as much as the Protestant is obliged to disregard those which have been already quoted.

Now, supposing for a moment that this statement was as undeniably true as it is, in fact, utterly and entirely false, observe what follows from it: simply this, which is what every Catholic believes, but every Protestant is, more or less, bound to deny, namely, that the Bible is not a plain and easy book which every man may read and understand for himself, but, on the contrary, is in many parts a very difficult book, and that we require some sure and trustworthy guide who shall have authority to declare to us its true meaning. It is a book which "the unlearned and unstable may easily wrest to their own destruction," (2 Pet. iii. 16;) and therefore, in order that we

may understand it aright and use it for our own salvation, it is necessary that we should have an interpreter whom we can trust both for learning and stability. But where shall we find such a one amongst our fellow-men? We may think one man more learned and more stable than another; but who will feel such thorough confidence in the learning and stability of any man as to be willing to stake his eternal happiness or misery upon it?

And we might go on to establish, in this way, the absolute necessity of an interpreter authorized by God Himself, and secured, by His express promise, against the possibility of falling into error; in a word, to establish the whole Catholic doctrine upon this subject. Such an argument, however, in no way belongs to our present purpose, for we are now merely addressing ourselves to a person who professes to derive his creed from the Bible and the Bible only, and to reject the authority of the Church; and we are trying his position by his own standard, and showing that, in point of fact, he goes beyond it and admits something else instead of it, or, at least, in addition to it, even at the very outset. This, I think, has been clearly shown already, and we

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might therefore fairly leave the matter here and go on to another branch of the subject. Nevertheless, that we may not appear to be guilty of the same fault ourselves of which we have convicted the Protestant, namely, a determination to close his eyes against certain parts of the Bible, let us see what are those texts which he pretends to allege in behalf of his own peculiar doctrine.

That doctrine, as I have said before, may be stated thus:—It is the duty of every man to examine for himself the truth of the doctrines which he is taught, and to put them to the test by an appeal to the Bible; and no man can be called upon to believe any thing as an article of the faith, and as necessary to salvation, which is not read therein or may not be proved thereby. Observe, then, what texts are necessary for his purpose: he must find words of Christ or of His Apostles commanding us to make use of no rule but the written Word of God, telling us that the written Word of God is sufficient for all purposes, and that all things are to be found therein; for any thing short of this does not establish the Protestant doctrine. Where, then, can he find such texts?

First, he quotes the words of our Lord, (St John, v. 39,) "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of Me." But where do these words contain a command from Almighty God bidding all men to read the Bible, and assuring them that the Bible is a sufficient guide into all truth ? Our Lord bids the Jews examine the Scriptures of the Old Testament, for that they testify of Him as the promised Messias ; and, as soon as they had recognized Him as such, they should at once listen to His words, receive His doctrine, and obey His commandments.

It is plain, therefore, that our Lord did not use the words, "Search the Scriptures," in the sense in which Protestants use them. He did not refer His hearers to the Scriptures in the same way that the Protestant refers you ; for if so, why did they need His further teaching ? He made the same use of the Scriptures as Catholics do in speaking to Protestants at this day. The Catholic says to Protestants, "Search the Scriptures," for these are they which testify of the Church as well as of her Head ; they expressly command you to "hear the Church," (St. Matt. xviii. 17,) and declare that she is "the

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pillar and ground of the truth," (1 Tim. iii. 15.) You ought, therefore, to listen to her voice, receive her doctrines, and obey her commandments. Our Lord bade the Jews examine the Scriptures for a *particular* object; is this the same thing as commanding Christians to examine the Scriptures for every object? He sent them to the Scriptures as testifying of *Him*, the Teacher, to whom, when recognized, they were to submit. Because the Scriptures testify plainly to the appointed teacher, the Church, does it therefore follow that it sets forth all other truths so clearly as that you should need no other teacher but it? Nay, does not the very contrary conclusion follow?

But, secondly, the Protestant quotes the words of St. Paul to Timothy, (2 Tim. iii. 15-17:) "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Now, of course, the only Scriptures that Timothy could have known from a child were the

Old Testament. Does the Protestant, then, mean to assert that the mere reading of the Old Testament is sufficient to teach a man all that is necessary for him to know in order that he may be saved? If so, what need was there of the New Testament? If, on the other hand, he does not consider that the Scriptures here spoken of are sufficient for this purpose, it is impossible that this text should prove that they would be made sufficient by the addition of others, for it says nothing whatever of any addition that was ever to be made to them at all.

But, thirdly, we are sometimes told that the Bereans were good Protestants and are even expressly commended as such by one of the writers of the New Testament, because we read of them, in the Acts of the Apostles, (xvii. 11,) that "they were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so." Surely, however, no one can pretend to argue from these words that the Bereans made the same use of the Holy Scriptures as Protestants insist upon now-a-days; the very contrary can be clearly shown by an examination of the history. For what was the real state of

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the case? St. Paul had "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he preached unto them was Christ," (ver. 2.) If, then, they would listen to the preacher at all, they could do no other than search the Scriptures, for it was precisely this to which he had directed their attention.

He had set before them the prophecies of the Old Testament relating to the sufferings, death, and rising again of the expected Messiah, and then he went on to tell them that in Jesus, whom he was come to preach to them, all these prophecies had been fulfilled. They searched the Scriptures, therefore, to see whether such things had, indeed, been foretold concerning the promised Saviour of mankind, and finding that they had, "many of them believed." But what did they believe? Did they really believe only what St. Paul was able to prove to them out of the Old Testament—for you must remember that this was the only part of the Bible then in existence—and did they refuse to believe any thing else for which he could not produce a written warrant out of those ancient Scriptures? If so, they could not even

believe that Jesus was the Christ, since this could not possibly be proved out of the Old Testament, every word of which had been written long before Jesus was born. You see that they received that which was the most important article of all, that which was in fact the very foundation of every thing else; viz., that Jesus was the Christ—they received this, I say, not because they found it in the Bible, for it was not yet written there, but on the testimony of the preacher, St. Paul. Their study of the Scriptures might teach them that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day," (Luke, xxiv. 46,) and so far it may have disposed their minds towards believing one who came to them saying that these things had been fulfilled. But it could not do more than this; it could not teach them that they really *had been* fulfilled. Both this and every other Christian doctrine which was proposed to them, they received, as I have said, not from the written Word of God, but from the teacher that was sent to them, the Apostle St. Paul. Even so a Catholic priest at the present day might open and allege the Scripture of the New Testament, in argument with a man who acknowledges their authority,

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as the Jews of Berea acknowledged the authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament; and he might show that our Lord established a society which was to endure throughout all ages, even until the end of time, and that He gave to this society power and authority to teach all nations all things whatsoever He had commanded. Then, having alleged thus much out of the written Word of God, he might still follow the example of St. Paul, and go on to show that "this Jesus whom he preached was Christ;" that the Church which he preached to them was in very deed the society to which such high and noble privileges were promised in Holy Scripture; and any one who should give heed to his preaching in the same way as the Bereans did, would not fail to meet with the same reward: he also would "believe;" believe not only the one doctrine which had been thus proved to him from Holy Scripture, viz., that the Church was the appointed teacher of mankind, but also every other doctrine which the same teacher might propose to his belief, whether written in the Bible or not. These are the principal texts alleged by Protestants in behalf of their favorite doctrine of "the Bible and the Bible only;" and you

see that there is not one of them which really says any thing at all like what the Protestant says; there is not one which teaches that the Bible contains all things necessary to salvation, so that we are not bound to believe any thing but what is written therein or may be proved thereby.

Neither is it any more to the purpose to quote, as is so often done, all those numerous texts which speak high and glorious things of *the Word of God*; for, in the first place, except they say distinctly (which they do not) that the written Word of God is all-sufficient, and contains every thing which we ought to know and believe for our soul's health, they do nothing towards really establishing the Protestant doctrine. But, secondly, it will be found, upon examination, that in almost every instance the texts really refer not to the written Word of God at all, but to the Word of God taught or preached. This is a very important distinction, plain to every body when once it has been pointed out, yet commonly overlooked by Protestants in consequence of that false notion which they have been always taught, and into the truth of which they never stop to inquire, that the Bible is the *only* Word of God. They

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do not believe that God speaks to mankind in any other way than by a message written in a book; when, therefore, they hear any thing said about the Word of God, they naturally take it for granted that it is the Bible which is being spoken of, and nothing else; whereas I will venture to say that there are few texts more manifestly opposed to Protestant doctrine upon this subject than some of these very passages which they so ignorantly refer to the Bible. Thus, St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians (1 Ep. ii. 13): "We thank God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God." What was this word of God? was it a *written* or a *spoken* word? "*You heard it of us, but you received it as the word of God;*" and you did right to receive it as such, for it is such in truth; God has sent His word or message to you through us, His messengers: "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. i. 21); "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. i. 2); He sent His Son to preach the Gospel; and in the

same way as the Father sent the Son, even so did the Son send us (St. John, xx. 22); and in hearing us, you are in fact hearing Him; and in hearing Him, you are hearing Him that sent Him (St. Luke, x. 16); so that our word is literally and truly the word of God. Who will deny that this is the plain and necessary meaning of the Apostle's words? and who will undertake to reconcile them with the principles of Protestantism?

Again, Protestants assuming that the *only* word of God is the Bible, have sometimes explained those words of St. Paul, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17), as though they too were spoken of the Bible, and were intended to declare that faith comes by studying that book; in other words, that the Bible contains all that should be the subject of our faith, all that we need believe in order that we may be saved. But hear how the Apostle explains his own word: "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they

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hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. x. 13-15.) Can any thing be more distinct than this short but most pregnant passage? And how does the Protestant deal with it? The *first* part of it he understands as all others understand it also; Protestants as well as Catholics are all agreed, that in order to be saved, we must call upon God; all are agreed, also, that in order to call upon God, we must first believe on Him, and that we cannot believe on Him except we have first heard of Him. But *now* comes the question that creates the separation between Catholics and Protestants: *How are we to hear of Him?* The Protestant answers, By reading the Bible, or listening to any body who will come and read it to us. The Catholic answers, By listening to a living *preacher*, and that preacher must have been *sent* by persons having authority for that purpose. The source from whence the Catholic answer is taken we see at once, for it might be stated in the very words of the Apostle, "How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" *But whence does the Protestant derive his answer? Is it from*

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The Bible and the Bible only? Or is it not clear from this, and the many other instances that have been quoted in these pages, that the Protestant, whilst professing to follow the Bible, is really forcing the Bible to follow him?

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WEIGHED IN ITS OWN BALANCE,
AND FOUND WANTING

DEVOTION TO SAINTS AND ANGELS.

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DEVOTION TO SAINTS AND ANGELS.

DEVOTION to saints and angels is a part of the Catholic religion, from which Protestants shrink with horror, and which they loudly denounce as superstitious and unscriptural. Now if they used this word "unscriptural" only in the sense of "not to be found in holy Scripture," it would scarcely fall within the scope of our present inquiry to say any thing at all about it; because all the world knows that this is not an argument which Catholics need care to dispute; for Catholics do not pretend to say that the whole system of their religious belief and practice is to be found in the written Word, but, on the contrary, that several portions of the divine revelation were never committed to writing at all, but were handed on from generation to generation by word of

mouth, or, as it is technically called, by tradition. When Protestants, however, speak against any of our doctrines as being unscriptural, they generally mean something more than this; they mean not only that it is not to be found in holy Scripture, but that something else *is* to be found there, which goes against the doctrine in question, and contradicts it. And this is altogether a different thing, and far more important; for although we do not believe that every thing that is true is contained in holy Scripture, yet we do believe that every thing that is contained in holy Scripture is true; so that it is often necessary, if we would make any way in controversy with Protestants, that we should be ready to show that on this or that particular subject which they may have selected for censure, there is no contradiction between the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of the Catholic Church.

In the present instance, the Protestant objections may perhaps be fairly stated thus:

1. There is no proof from holy Scripture that the saints and angels intercede for us; and if they do not, there is no use in our asking them to do so.
2. Even if they do intercede for us, at any

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rate they cannot hear us calling upon them; for to suppose that they know any thing of what is going on upon earth would be to suppose them gifted with omniscience, which is an attribute of God.

3. To believe that the saints and angels pray for us, and act as it were as mediators between God and man, so that God is inclined to favor us through their merits, or for their sake, implies that He is not all gracious and bountiful in Himself. Moreover, it encroaches on the office of One Mediator.

4. But Catholics do much more than merely ask the saints and angels to pray for them; they ask them also to interfere actively in their behalf; "to deliver and protect them," "to give them temporal and spiritual benefits;" thus attributing to them another of God's attributes, omnipotence. They even make use of expressions which put the saints on an equality with God; as for instance, "we trust in God and the saints;" "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, help us;" and other expressions which go still further, and put God out of view altogether, for instance, when they call the Blessed Virgin "our hope, yea, the sole ground of our hope."

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5. Lastly, it is urged against us that St. Paul himself has expressly warned us against the worshipping of angels (Col. ii. 18); and that when St. John the Evangelist was in the act of doing it, the angel himself forbade him (Rev. xix. 10).

These, I say, are the ordinary objections, professedly derived from holy Scripture, which are urged by Protestants against the Catholic doctrine about the invocation of the saints and angels; and we propose to say a few words about each of them in order, confining ourselves (as by the conditions of our argument we are bound to do), to the Bible alone for our answers, and using, of course, only that portion of the Bible, and that particular translation of it, which our adversaries acknowledge to be of authority.

1. First, then, it is objected that we have no grounds in any thing that is recorded in holy Scripture for believing that the saints and angels ever pray for us at all, or have any thing to do with prayer of any kind; to them there is no longer any necessity for prayer; they have already entered into their rest; henceforth they have only to bless and praise

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God for all eternity. Such is the objection; and a more diligent perusal of that sacred volume of which Protestants talk so much, and understand so little, will furnish us with the answer. It is true that the saints and angels have no occasion to pray for themselves; but it does not therefore follow that they may not pray for others; and, in fact, it is distinctly revealed to us concerning the angels, that it is a part of their office of ministry for the Church on earth to offer prayers for it: thus we read in Zec. i. 12, 13, "The angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which Thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words." What is this but an instance of one of the heavenly host interceding for the Church, and the Lord vouchsafing something gracious and merciful in answer to his intercession? Then again we read in the Apocalypse or Book of Revelation (v. 8), that "the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are

the prayers of saints." These living creatures and elders are themselves also saints, but saints in glory; for they speak of having been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. And the "prayers of saints" which they offered are the prayers of the faithful upon earth, for "saints" in the New Testament is the word most commonly used as the name or title of Christians. Here, then, we find the saints in heaven in their adoration of the Lamb of God, and as an accompaniment to "the new song" which they sang, bearing and presenting the prayers of the faithful upon earth. This shows not only that the saints in heaven take an interest in the spiritual concerns of their brethren upon earth, but also that there is a real communion of prayers and oblations between the Church militant and the Church triumphant. The saints in heaven offer or present to God the prayers of the saints on earth. If, then, the angels, who have never known sin, pray for the children of men, as we have seen that they do from the language of the prophet Zechariah; and if the saints, whose sins have been blotted out, and who are already crowned with crowns of gold upon their head, still con-

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tinue their charity towards those left behind them, as we see that they do from the passage now before us,—is it a very *unscriptural* conclusion to draw from these facts, that the saints may also pray for us; that they not only offer up our prayers, but add still further other prayers of their own?

2. But this will appear still more clearly from the passages which will be quoted in answer to the second and most popular objection, namely, that even though the saints and angels may pray generally for all Christian people, for the whole estate of Christ's Church upon earth, yet they know nothing of the wants of any one Christian in particular; they cannot, therefore, intercede for one person more than another; they are ignorant of what is going on amongst us, and cannot therefore hear the prayers which individuals may address to them. Now, first, as to the general fact that "the spirits of just men made perfect," the saints in glory, have knowledge of some at least of this earth's doings, we may appeal to the language of St. Paul, who speaks of them as forming a cloud of witnesses over our heads; and if they are witnesses, and if we are to take courage from the thought that they are looking on at us, it

must be because they really know and take an interest in what we are doing. "I charge thee," says St. Paul, writing to his beloved son Timothy (i. 21), "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things." St. Paul calls the elect angels to witness the injunction he lays upon Timothy, just as he calls upon God and our blessed Saviour to witness it. What is the meaning of this, if they could know nothing either of the injunction or of the manner in which it was obeyed? Again, our Lord declares that there is joy in heaven, and in the presence of the angels of God, over a sinner doing penance; it is impossible therefore but that it must at least be known in heaven by the angels of God when a sinner *is* doing penance. Then, besides these general statements bearing upon the point before us, holy Scripture contains also particular instances of this knowledge. When Moses and Elias appeared at the transfiguration, they knew and spoke of the decease which our Lord should accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke ix. 31). When Samuel appeared to Saul, he knew what was passing at that time among the people of Israel, and what would take place the next day (1 Sam.

xxviii. 16-19). Or, if these instances are objected to as being extraordinary and miraculous occurrences, from which we may not fairly draw any general conclusion as to the powers and privileges of departed souls, let us turn to the Book of Revelation, where surely, if anywhere in the Bible, is given us an insight into heaven, and we are told both what it is like, and who are its inhabitants, and what is their occupation. First, then, we read in that book of mysteries (vi. 9-11) that "the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held, cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" These blessed martyrs then, though no longer upon the earth, yet knew what was happening there, and knew that their blood had not yet been avenged. By and by we read about the four and twenty elders who had been already mentioned, that they know that "the nations are angry, and the wrath of God is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged" (xi. 16-18). They know also that the devil is accusing their brethren before God, and a loud voice declares to them when he is

cast down; and that "the brethren have overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;" and that they have been constant, even to martyrdom (xii. 10, 11). So also it is known when Babylon is destroyed, and the saints, "the holy Apostles and Prophets," are called upon "to rejoice over her, because God had avenged them on her" (xviii. 20). And so on, throughout the whole of that book, the saints and angels—the whole court of heaven—are always represented as looking on upon the affairs of this world, having knowledge of all their variations, taking a lively interest in them, so as to be filled at one time with indignation, at another with joy, according to the character of the several events which they witness.

As to the manner in which this knowledge is conveyed to them, that is altogether a distinct question, into which it is not necessary that we should enter. It is only the fact which intimately concerns us, whether or not the saints and angels are conscious of what is happening here below. When once this fact has been ascertained, we may be content to leave the manner of their obtaining this consciousness, as one of the secret things of God,

which are hidden from our eyes. Nevertheless I am tempted to make one or two observations upon it, which may tend to diminish the difficulty that is felt by some Protestants in this matter.

First, then, it is worth while to observe, that it appears from what we read in the Bible that the saints, even while yet living upon earth, have often possessed knowledge of what was passing about them, but which they could not have known by any ordinary means. Thus Eliseus knew what Gehazi had done; and he gave the king of Israel information of all that passed in the Syrian camp; and he knew when the king sent to murder him; and all this knowledge he had, supernaturally indeed, yet at the same time so habitually, that it seemed to him an unusual thing when he did not know what had troubled the Sunamite woman. In like manner Ahias, though he could not see, for his eyes were dim, knew Jeroboam's wife in her disguise, for God had told him she was coming. St. Peter too could read the consciences of Ananias and Sapphira; and St. Paul could see the heart of the impotent man, "perceiving that he had faith to be healed." And in the same way Samuel said to Saul, "I

will tell thee all that is in thy heart" (1 Sam. ix. 19). Again, Almighty God said of Abraham, "Can I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?" And on account of this familiar converse with God, he was called the "friend of God." Of Moses too it was said, "God spoke to him face to face, as a man is wont to speak to his friend" (Exod. xxxiii. 11). And lastly, our Lord told the Apostles, "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth. But I have called you friends; because all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known to you" (John xv. 15). It would seem, then, that a divine communication of knowledge is one distinguishing mark of the divine favor; and can we suppose that Abraham, and Moses, and the Apostles, are less the friends of God now,—less in His favor, and less endowed with supernatural light and intelligence now,—than they were whilst yet they remained upon earth? Since, then, the saints on earth have been gifted with such light, surely there can be no difficulty in believing that they possess such knowledge in heaven, where they are in the immediate presence of God, and see Him "face to face," and "know even as they are known."

Some persons, however, not observing this characteristic of so many of God's most eminent servants, have not scrupled to say, that it is absurd to suppose that He would reveal to the saints the prayers made to them by those whom they have left behind on earth, or reveal to them any other events of the world below, in order that they might pray to Him. And yet a more attentive study of the written Word would have told them of a saint who was once removed from the sight of men for a considerable time, during which he lived a supernatural life in the more immediate presence of God; and that, during that time, God did reveal to him what was passing among His people, and did this (as it seems) for the express purpose that he might intercede for them. For God knew that it would be Moses' first thought to pray for the children of Israel; and, to try him the more, He charged him *not* to pray, and offered to raise Moses himself to be the father of a new race. Nevertheless Moses did intercede for them, and "the Lord hearkened unto him" (Deut. ix. 19). Again, in the other instance of a forty days' fast recorded in the Old Testament, when Elias was overwhelmed with the dreadful state of his people, God made

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known to him the number of the faithful left in Israel, in order that he might be encouraged to persevere in his labors. And still earlier than either of these instances, at the destruction of Sodom, this seems to have been the purpose wherefore God would not hide it from Abraham, namely, that he might pray for Lot; for it is said afterwards, "God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow."

You see, then, that there is really no scriptural objection, not only against the general fact that the saints and angels may have an accurate knowledge of what is happening upon earth, but not even against a particular explanation which is often given as to the manner in which this knowledge is communicated to them, viz. by special revelation from Almighty God. On the contrary, you see that both the general fact and the particular explanation of it may be shown to be in perfect harmony with holy Scripture, if, indeed, we should not rather say that the first is even positively revealed to us there.

3. Equally unfounded in Scripture is the third Protestant objection to the doctrine of the intercession of the saints, viz. that it im-

plies that God is not all-gracious and merciful in Himself, and that it encroaches on the office of the One Mediator. For Almighty God is continually represented in holy Scripture as showing favor for the sake of those who had pleased Him during life and were now deceased; "I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for My servant Abraham's sake" (Gen. xxvi. 24); "I will not do it for David thy father's sake; but will give one tribe to thy son for David My servant's sake" (1 Kings xi. 12, 13, 14; xv. 4); "The Lord would not destroy Judah for David His servant's sake;" "I will defend this city, to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake" (2 Kings viii. 19; xix. 34; xx. 6); "He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant" (Ps. cv. 42).

God also allows Himself to be entreated for the sake of His servants departed; in other words, He allows Himself to be entreated "through the merits of the saints." Thus Moses prayed, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants, to whom thou swarest by Thine own self" (Ex. xxxii. 13). "For Thy servant David's sake, turn not away the face of Thy anointed" (Ps. cxxxii. 10). This

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is repeated 2 Chron. vi. 42, where, by the by, it is an instance of its being used in divine worship—"O Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine anointed; remember the mercies of David Thy servant." So again Elisha said, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (2 Kings ii. 14); and he obtained a miracle in answer to this prayer.

Again, we find many instances in holy Scripture of persons who had incurred the divine displeasure being directed to ask others, God's chosen servants, to intercede for them, before they could obtain pardon. Abimelech, when threatened with divine vengeance, was told by God that Abraham was "a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." And when Abraham prayed, "God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maid-servants" (Gen. xx. 7-17). In like manner, the three friends of Job were told that God was displeased with them, and they were sent to Job. "My servant Job shall pray for you, for him will I accept" (Job xlvi. 8). "So they went, and did according as the Lord commanded them; and the Lord accepted Job: and the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends."

Nor does this encroach in any way on the function of our Lord, who is the one Mediator, God made man, pleading His own merit, and offering the propitiation made by Himself; for the saints are mediators or intercessors only as men believing in God, and accepted in and through Christ: those before His advent finding favor with God for the sake of His redemption that was to be made, and those since as redeemed and justified in Him; so that holy men are often spoken of in different parts of the Bible as making a propitiation of this character. Thus Aaron, in the plague, "offered the incense; and standing between the dead and the living, made an atonement for the people" (Num. xvi. 47). And Moses tells the people (Deut. ix. 18), "I fell down before the Lord your God for forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread nor drink water because of all your sins which ye sinned and the Lord hearkened unto me." When, therefore, God wished to express the grievousness of the sins of Israel, He told Ezechiel that not even Noah, Daniel, and Job could propitiate Him: "they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezech. xiv.

12-21). Yet Noah had saved himself and his family in the destruction of the world, and Job had obtained the pardon of his friends. And again, God said to Jeremiah, "Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be towards this people" (Jerem. xv. 1). Moses had obtained pardon for the people when God threatened to destroy them, and Samuel obtained their deliverance from the Philistines; yet now the Divine indignation was so great, that even they could not appease it. And several times God told the same prophet, "Pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me, for I will not hear thee" (Jerem. vii. 16); showing that it is an extraordinary thing when God will not accept the intercession and propitiation of His chosen servants. Almighty God, in the extremity of His anger, forbade His prophets to pray for the people, as if their intercession would have imposed an obligation upon Him to spare the offenders.

Nor is it a proof that God is not all-gracious and bountiful in Himself, that He chooses we should employ the intercession of His saints. On the contrary, it is a remarkable proof of

His graciousness and bounty. God requires us to pray to Him. He has made our praying to Him the condition of granting us what we need. He vouchsafes to be moved by our prayers. Nay, He has put us, in a manner, in each other's power, and has made the bestowal of the graces which He desires to pour down on others depend on our interceding for them; as thus, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest" (Matt. ix. 38). "Pray one for another, that ye may be saved; for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (James v. 16). This being so, is it not a special proof of His loving-kindness that He provides for us a whole army of just and holy intercessors, that their prayers may, so to say, compel Him to grant what His divine heart longs to bestow? The Catholic doctrine of the intercession of saints and angels is but an exemplification of this law of His providence, viz. that He grants mercies and blessings in answer to prayer, and that He has special regard to the supplications of His most faithful servants. It does not contradict the Bible, but manifestly agrees with it, and can be seen to be a part of the same system.

4. Catholica, however, it is said, do much

more than this; not only do they ask the saints and angels to pray for them, but also to give them this or that temporal or spiritual blessing, to help or defend them; in a word, to interfere actively in their behalf, as though they were themselves possessed of power, and could bestow gifts and blessings according to their own will independently of Almighty God. Such is the inference which a Protestant draws from the language of Catholic devotion; and he refuses to believe us, when we tell him that the true meaning of that language is, that we beg the saints to move Almighty God to give us the things we ask for. Yet holy Scripture, if he would but study it with more attention, would supply him with instances of the same use of language. Thus we read in 2 Kings ii. 9, 10, that "Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask *what I shall do for thee*, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me. And He said, Thou hast asked a hard thing; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so." Elisha here asked what Elijah could not possibly give him, yet the latter promises that he shall have it on the fulfilment of a

certain condition. Elisha asked a petition of Elijah which none but God could grant: so we too, in like manner, often call upon the saints to do what belongs only to the power of God. If Elisha's words do not attribute omnipotence to Elijah, no more do our prayers ascribe omnipotence to the saints. Again, St. Paul tells Timothy, "In doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. iv. 16); yet this does not mean that Timothy could save himself or his people without the help of God's grace. Persons often use the same language in the common affairs of life; as, for instance, they do not scruple to say to a physician whom they have called in to advise in some dangerous illness of a friend or relative, You are our only hope; or again, it is often said of some eminent politician, that in these difficult times he is the only hope of his country; yet in neither of these cases do we mean to exclude the idea of divine providence overruling all, without whom the best human aid would be utterly unavailing. Such an expression, therefore, as "thou art our only hope," used of our Blessed Lady in the devotions of a Catholic, means this, Thou art our only hope of obtaining God's help; for we

have no confidence in ourselves, or our own worthiness and power to obtain that help.

And so in like manner, when the name of a saint is joined with the name of God in the same sentence, as for instance, "we put our trust in God and the saints," the word common to both is not necessarily applied to both in the same sense; and Catholics may fairly claim to be believed when they assert that they do not use it in the same sense. For here, again, we may refer our accusers to the language of holy Scripture. Among the chief duties we owe to God are to believe in Him, to worship Him, to fear Him, and to put our trust in Him. We cannot render these duties to another in the same way, and with the same intention, as we render them to God, without committing the sin of idolatry. Nevertheless, it is written in the book of Exodus, that "the people believed the Lord and His servant Moses" (xiv. 31); and elsewhere, "All the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king" (1 Chron. xxix. 20). "All the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel" (1 Kings xii. 18). "They cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gedeon" (Judges vii. 20). In all these instances the same word is used in

reference to God and to His servants; yet in a lower sense in the one case than it is in the other. The people plainly did not worship the king in the same way in which they worshipped God; nor could they have cried, "The sword of Gedeon," with the same degree of confidence with which they exclaimed, "The sword of the Lord." Indeed, they had confidence in the sword of Gedeon only because it was the sword of the Lord in Gedeon's hands. They feared Samuel, because he was the Lord's minister. They worshipped the king, because he was the Lord's anointed. They believed Moses, because he was the Lord's representative, and was invested with His authority. Thus the honor, and the fear, and the worship which they paid to the favored servants of the Lord, terminated really in the Lord Himself. Why may not the language of Catholic devotion, then, be subjected to a similar interpretation?

Will it be said that these are statements of plain matters of fact, in which it is easy to perceive the difference of sense; but that in the language of devotion we have a right to expect greater accuracy and precision? Yet there are instances in Scripture of created beings being

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joined with God even in prayers and invocations : thus Jacob said in blessing the sons of Joseph, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long until this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads" (Gen. xlviii. 15, 16). Again, the book of Revelation begins, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness," &c. (Apoc. i. 4). This is sometimes called a blessing in the name of the Holy Trinity ; and it is said that the seven spirits are the Holy Ghost in His sevenfold gifts. But this cannot be, because as the Holy Ghost is God Himself, He cannot be described as before the throne of God (or in sight of the throne, as in the Vulgate and the Greek) ; for since He is one with the Father and the Son, He cannot be separated from them, and called either a spirit or seven spirits before the throne, on which He reigns with them in equal majesty or power. We must believe, then, that the first title, "He that is, and was, and is to come," is the Holy Trinity ; that the seven spirits are the seven

angels; and that our Lord in His human nature is mentioned last, because the many titles added to His name are such as especially belong to Him as Head of the new creation.

In these passages, therefore, we find the patriarch giving blessing in the name of God and of his angel-guardian; and the Apostle giving blessing in the name of the Holy Trinity, and of our Lord incarnate, and of the seven archangels. Yet these angels, thus invoked to bless, could only bless by their prayers, and not as Almighty God gives His blessing. And thus though joined with God in one and the same invocation, yet it is in a different sense.

5. It only remains, then, that we should notice the fifth and last objection which is alleged against our invocation of the saints and angels, viz. that we sin against the warning of St. Paul, who forbids us to worship them, and against the prohibition of one of the angels themselves, who refuses to receive the worship offered him by St. John.

The words of St. Paul are these, "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels;" and this to a Protestant, who never takes the trouble to

inquire seriously, as a matter of fact and history, *what* the Apostles taught, but handles each text separately, and puts upon all his own private interpretation,—to such a one, I say, these few words are abundantly sufficient to satisfy him that what St. Paul warned his disciples against is precisely what Catholics practise, without ever taking the trouble to inquire with any diligence into the true nature of either one or the other,—either of the apostolic warning or of the Catholic doctrine. Yet if they would but take this trouble, they would find that there were in the very earliest days of the Church certain heretics, disciples of Simon Magus and others, whose religion might have been accurately described by these words, “worshipping of angels;” men who believed that the angels were the creators and the masters of this lower world, and who worshipped them therefore with a self-willed and superstitious worship, “not holding the Head,” that is not believing in the Divinity of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and denying His mediatorship and atonement. Since, then, there was a heresy by which some Christians were being deceived at the time St. Paul wrote this warning, and which some portion at least of the

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language in which the warning is given very aptly describes,—I do not say that therefore it must needs be that this was what St. Paul was speaking against, but certainly,—Protestants have no right to assume that he was condemning the mere invocation of saints and angels by other Christians who *do* “hold the Head,” and acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the King both of saints and angels, and worship Him with supreme worship as their Lord and their God.

Then as to the instance of St. John, who fell down before an angel to worship him, and was forbidden by the angel himself, who said, “See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus; worship God;” the Apostle either meant to give divine worship or he did not, but only such inferior worship as had been given by holy men of old to some of the heavenly host, as, for instance, by Abraham, Jacob, Joshua, and others. If he intended to pay divine worship, it can only have been because the angel appeared in such surpassing glory that the Apostle mistook him for our Lord; and this is how St. Augustin understood the passage, a thousand years before Protestantism had arisen.

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to call in question the Catholic practice of invoking the angels: and at any rate, to pay divine honor to a created being is what no Catholic defends or practises; so that if this interpretation of the passage be correct, it in nowise contradicts the Catholic doctrine, or condemns any Catholic practice. If, on the other hand, St. John only intended to pay that inferior degree of worship which Joshua (for instance) paid to "the captain of the host of the Lord" when he appeared to him by Jericho, and which was not then refused, then the act was not in itself unlawful, but must have been refused for some other reason; and St. Gregory considers that this reason was the high dignity of St. John as an apostle and prophet and confessor of Christ, for the angel expressly calls himself his "fellow-servant, and of the number of his brethren that have the testimony of Jesus:" and at any rate it is for Protestants to show wherefore that which happened to St. John is to be taken as so conclusive an argument against the practice of any devotion in honor of these heavenly spirits, and that which was done by Abraham, Jacob, and Joshua, to be taken as absolutely no argument at all in favor of such devotion. Cer-

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tainly this is an inconsistency which no candid inquirer into the meaning of God's Word can fail to recognize ; and it is one which demonstrates the Protestant reasoning upon the passage in question to be at least inclusive, which is all that at present concerns us.



PROTESTANTISM
WEIGHED IN ITS OWN BALANCE,
AND FOUND WANTING.

THE SACRAMENTS.

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PROTESTANTISM WEIGHED.

IN a late Number we compared the Protestant doctrine on the subject of the Church with the language of holy Scripture upon the same subject, and showed how thoroughly at variance they were the one with the other; that though Protestants were most loud in their declamations upon the necessity of following the Bible and the Bible only, yet in fact, in all that concerned the Church, they really followed a system of their own devising, which was plainly inconsistent with what is written in that holy book. At present we propose submitting to the same test the Protestant doctrine on the subject of the Sacraments.

But first we must give a short explanation of what is meant by this word "Sacrament;" for it is not to be found in the Protestant translation of the Bible, and it certainly is

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not a word which explains its own meaning at once, as soon as it is heard. We mean, then, by a sacrament, some outward sign or ceremony ordained by Christ, whereby grace is conveyed to our souls. In this definition you will observe that three things are required to make up a sacrament: first, there must be an outward sign or ceremony; secondly, there must be an inward grace accompanying that sacred and mysterious sign, conveyed by it to the souls of all who duly receive the sign; and thirdly, the ordinance must have been instituted by Christ Himself, since He it is by whom grace came, and nobody but He could ever have united the gift of grace to the application of any outward sign whatever.

This, then, is the Catholic definition of a sacrament; and if anybody in this country had been asked three or four hundred years ago, whether any such ordinances as these had really been instituted under the new law, and if so, how many of them? he would have immediately answered, that there were seven: Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders, and Matrimony. He would have said, that Christ,

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knowing our weakness, had mercifully provided us with aids suited to all our spiritual needs, by establishing in His Church a number of sacraments, embracing all the important events of life, and imparting to us, each in its proper time and place, that spiritual strength and grace which are necessary for the due discharge of our Christian duties; that He has given one sacrament for infancy, another for childhood, a third as food for mature age, a fourth for spiritual sickness, a fifth for the increase of mankind, a sixth for their government in society, and a seventh for death. At the time of the Reformation, however, this was one of the points on which Protestants introduced a new doctrine, or at least contradicted the old one; and whilst they rejected five out of the seven sacraments altogether, they no longer believed the same as their forefathers had always believed even concerning the other two. In the following pages we are not going to prove the truth of the ancient and Catholic doctrine either by an appeal to Scripture or in any other way, but only to try by the test of the Bible and the Bible only the new or Protestant doctrine.



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But here we are met at once by the same difficulty of which we have already had occasion to say a few words when we were speaking about the Church, viz. the difficulty of defining with any certainty what Protestant doctrine really is. For some of the Protestant sects, such as that which is established in this country, for example, have retained in their articles or confessions of faith many words and phrases that seem at first sight to be not so very unlike the faith of Catholics, whilst yet, as a matter of fact, the members of those sects are as far as possible from really believing what their own formularies would seem to express. Without entering, however, too minutely into these inconsistencies, it is notorious that the doctrine of the great mass of English Protestants of the present day on the subject of the sacraments is something of this kind; either they believe that they are mere ceremonies whereby a man professes himself to be a follower of Christ, a member of the great Christian family; or that they are pledges and witnesses of the truth of the Divine promises in our regard; or lastly, that they affect and improve the condition of the soul by virtue of the prayers which accom-

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pany their ministration and the faith of the individual who receives them.

This last explanation, however, can find no place in the Sacrament of Baptism as administered to infants, who are incapable of forming an act of faith. Hence, therefore, this sacrament is altogether rejected by some of the Protestant sects; and to the great majority even of those who retain it, it is a perplexing problem, of which they find it difficult to give any satisfactory account either to themselves or others; so that on the whole, we shall not, I think, greatly err, if we say that Protestants in general look upon the Christian sacraments just as they look upon the Jewish ordinances of which we read in the Old Testament; that is, as mere signs of covenant, designed to confirm and encourage our faith and hope, not as channels to convey really sanctifying grace and strength to the soul: and this doctrine we shall now proceed to try by the test which Protestants themselves select, namely, the express declarations of the written Word of God.

To begin, then, with the first sacrament of all, the Sacrament of Baptism; the Catholic Church teaches that by this sacrament we

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receive as it were a second birth, whereby we are made the children of God, and consequently heirs of heaven; and that we are also cleansed from all our sins; that is, infants who are baptized are thereby cleansed from the guilt of original sin, and adults who are baptized are thereby cleansed from the guilt both of original sin and of actual. This, shortly stated, is the Catholic doctrine; and some Protestants believe the same, or rather think that they do; but such is not the doctrine of the great majority, more especially of those who are most loud in their profession of exclusive obedience to the teaching of holy Scripture. On the contrary, there is no doctrine which these persons are more forward and vehement in denouncing; they even dare to call it a Satanic delusion, a soul-destroying doctrine. What doctrine they would put in its stead as the true and scriptural meaning of the Sacrament of Baptism, it would not be easy to define, and happily we need not attempt it; it is enough for our purpose that, like Protestant doctrine on all other subjects, it is at least the denial of the Catholic doctrine. Now the Catholic doctrine, as we have seen, attributes two great spiritual gifts or

blessings to this sacrament; regeneration, or a new birth, and the forgiveness of sins. Both of these, therefore, the Protestant doctrine denies, and denies with the utmost indignation. Protestants laugh to scorn the very idea of such high spiritual gifts, or indeed any spiritual gift at all, being bestowed through the medium of an outward and sensible sign; and they call us legal and carnally-minded, and I know not what besides, for thinking and teaching otherwise. Let us see how all this Protestant declamation will stand the test of Scripture; let us place it side by side with the words of holy writ, that we may the more easily mark their agreement or disagreement.

First, then, it is quite clear and undeniable that baptism was to form in some way or other a part of the religion which Jesus Christ came to establish upon earth; for the words of the commission which He gave to His Apostles, before He was taken up from them into heaven, are too precise and distinct to admit of any doubt upon this subject: "Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth; go ye, therefore, and teach all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). You see the Apostles were sent not only to teach, but also to baptize; it was not enough that they should teach Christian doctrine, they must also administer Christian sacraments; and as far as we can judge from these words of our Lord, the one would seem to be quite as important as the other: "Go and teach," or make disciples of "all nations, and baptize them."

And this impression concerning the importance of baptism is still further confirmed when we look at the account which another Evangelist has given us of this same last conversation of our blessed Lord with His Apostles. In the Gospel of St. Mark (xvi. 15, 16) it stands thus: "Jesus said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Here it is distinctly stated that baptism is necessary to salvation; our Lord does not say that he that believeth shall be saved, but he that be-

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lieveth *and is baptized*; faith then, or belief, is not of itself sufficient to secure our everlasting salvation; we must also have received the Christian sacrament of baptism.

Is this the language which Protestants use? is this the message which they deliver when they go out to preach the Gospel to heathen nations, or when they attempt to *convert* any portion of our own? Could they use this language to express their doctrine? Surely not; surely it is not too much to say that Protestantism leaves this solemn declaration of our Lord utterly without a meaning; it does not account for the prominent position which Christ's words assign to the Sacrament of Baptism. At the same time, since Protestants have at least retained the sacrament, have not rejected the use of baptism altogether, but do baptize as well as teach, they cannot be accused of positive disobedience to this commandment of Christ, though the doctrine which they hold renders the command unintelligible, and the declaration by which it was accompanied without a meaning. In order to show with clearness that the contradiction between the Protestant doctrine and the teaching of the Word of God, upon this

subject, is direct and immediate, we must go on to look at those passages which speak of baptism somewhat more at length, giving us a certain insight into what it really is.

Now we have already said that, according to the Catholic doctrine, regeneration, or a new birth, is a gift conferred on us by baptism, but that Protestants deny this: let us see whether our Lord has anywhere told us any thing on this subject. “Jesus said unto Nicodemus, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John iii. 3-5). Here we are assured by Jesus Christ, first, that to be regenerated or born again is an absolutely essential condition of entering into the kingdom of God; and secondly, that this regeneration is a birth “of water and of the Spirit”—not of the Spirit only, but “of water and the Spirit.” In what way are these words believed and understood by Protestants? They talk a

good deal about the necessity of our being born again of the Holy Spirit; but do they ever say any thing at all about our being born "*of water and of the Holy Spirit?*" And if not, what right have they thus to set at naught the Word of God by their traditions, thus to put asunder what God has united? And in so doing, are they following the Bible and the Bible only, or are they not rather rejecting the plain language of the Bible, because it does not agree with some preconceived idea or theory of their own? X

But here a Protestant may object that, after all, our Lord does not expressly mention baptism in this place; perhaps He was not really speaking about it. Be it so, we reply; at any rate, it is quite clear that He is speaking about regeneration, or the new birth, and He says of it that we must be born of water as well as of the Holy Spirit; and we wish to know how a Protestant is to prove that he is going by the Bible, and the Bible only, when he affirms that regeneration has nothing at all to do with water, or any thing else that is visible and external, but only with the Holy Spirit?

Of course, we are very well aware that the language of Scripture is sometimes to be un-

derstood literally and sometimes figuratively, and that it need not be literal in one place because it is literal in another; but the question is, How is a Protestant to determine for himself, and to persuade others, that in this particular instance it is to be taken figuratively, not literally? We read in the prophet Ezechiel (xxxvi. 25), that it was to be one of the blessings of the Gospel, that "God should sprinkle clean water upon us, and that we should be clean;" and it is immediately added in the very same place, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Again: it is foretold by another prophet, that "in that day a fountain shall be opened for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xiii. 1); and other prophets have used the same language. Now these words would certainly seem to imply a connection of some kind between a certain "sprinkling with clean water" and a cleansing from sin, and the gift of a new heart and a new spirit. I do not say that anybody is *obliged* to give this interpretation to the words; and doubtless if there were nothing in the Gospel dispensation which really corre-

sponded with the literal interpretation of these prophecies, it would be doing no great violence to the language of holy writ to understand them in a purely figurative sense. But when, on the contrary, we take up the holy Gospels, and find there an express declaration of our Lord that we must be born again of water and of the Holy Spirit, and an express commission given by Him to His Apostles, that they should go and administer to every creature a sacred rite, of which the outward and visible part is precisely this very element of "clean water,"—when, I say, we consider these things, thus comparing scripture with scripture, as Protestants tell us we should always be careful to do, the whole question assumes a different aspect, and I cannot see how Protestants can justify themselves from the charge of forcing words out of their obvious and natural meaning, and shutting their eyes to the plain declarations of holy Scripture, that the outward pouring of water does, by God's grace, cleanse us inwardly from all sin.

Let us, however, pass by for the present this conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus, as though it really were spoken about something else, and not about baptism; let us suppose

that our Lord did not mean to say that we must be born *of water and* of the Holy Spirit, but only that we must be born of the Holy Spirit, who would work the same effects upon our souls as water does upon our bodies, cleansing them from all spot and stain; have not the Apostles or the Evangelists anywhere spoken of the Sacrament of Baptism? and if so, have they spoken of it as an ordinance conferring real spiritual grace, or only as a sign or symbol? We read in the Acts of the Apostles (ii. 38), that when Peter preached to the assembled multitude on the day of Pentecost, the people were "pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Observe, this is the very first occasion upon which the Apostles exercised the commission intrusted to them by their Lord, of preaching the Gospel; and soon as they are asked by those who gladly received their word, what they must do in order that they may be saved, they answer, that they must repent and be baptized. Why

must they be baptized? "For the remission of their sins." What will be the consequence of their being baptized? "They will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." This was the teaching of St. Peter, when he had himself been just "filled with the Holy Ghost:"—is it also the teaching of Protestantism?

Take another instance: you know the history of the miraculous conversion of St. Paul, how he fell to the earth and was struck blind, whilst he was on his road to Damascus, and how, after he had spent three days without sight, neither eating nor drinking, a devout man named Ananias was sent to him by God, that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts ix. 17); and "Ananias came unto him and said, Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts xxii. 16). Ananias was a messenger sent expressly by Almighty God; did he hold out delusive hopes to Saul, and say what was false, when he bid him be baptized for the washing away of his sins? If not, how can Protestants, professing to receive their religious creed from the Bible, and from nothing else,—how can they dare to say, as they commonly do, that to connect the

forgiveness of sins with any outward ceremony, such as baptism, is to return to the bondage of Judaism, and to obscure the glorious liberty of the Gospel ?

There are many other passages in the New Testament which I should like to quote upon this subject, and to examine at full length ; but as I wish to say something about the other sacrament also, I can only just allude to some of the most important among them, and pass on. I would ask, then, whether to deny any spiritual grace to the Sacrament of Baptism is not a strange way of following that Bible which tells us that "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ?" (Gal. iii. 27.) Whether to deny that there is any connection between the washing of baptism and the renewing of our hearts by the Holy Ghost, is not a strange way of following that Bible which teaches us that "Christ has saved us according to His great mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost?" (Tit. iii. 5.) Whether to deny that any outward washing can by God's grace effect an inward cleansing, is not a strange way of following that Bible which tells us that "Christ gave Himself for the Church, that He might

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sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word?" (Eph. v. 26.)*

Remember, I have quoted these passages not to prove the Catholic doctrine, but in order to show you that at any rate the Protestant doctrine upon the subject is not exactly that pure and simple following of the Word of God which Protestant professions would lead us to expect; and for this purpose, I think, nobody will deny that the passages which have been quoted are even more than sufficient. We will at once pass on, therefore, to that other sacrament which Protestants profess to have retained, but about which they are certainly as far as possible from having taken their doctrine from the Bible, and the Bible only; I mean, the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist. Upon this subject the language of holy Scripture, wherever it has spoken at all, is so extremely clear and strong, and at the same time so identical with that which Catholics use to express their own belief about it at the present day, that it is not possible to set it aside by a mere appeal to the Bible; and Protestants themselves are very

* By "the word" is here meant the form of words used in baptizing, which our Lord Himself enjoined, and which give sacramental efficacy to the "washing of water."

well aware of this, and feel it keenly. Take up any Protestant work you please intended to disprove the Catholic doctrine, that is, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and you will find that it proceeds almost entirely on the ground of its alleged absurdity, or contradictoriness, or impossibility; in a word, its inconsistency with common sense and human reason, not its opposition to the teaching of Scripture. Indeed, it could not be otherwise, for the words and forms of speech which are necessary to express the Catholic doctrine, are simply the words and forms of speech which are used by Christ and His Apostles. Thus, before the institution of the sacrament, when Christ forewarned His disciples of the great gift which He would one day bestow upon them, He said, "I am the living Bread, which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (St. John vi. 51): and we Catholics believe that He literally fulfilled this promise, and that he really did give bread which was His flesh, even the same flesh which He gave for the life of the world. At the moment of the institution itself, Christ said, "This

is My Body—this is My Blood;” and we believe that it *was* His Body, and that it *was* His Blood. Again: St. Paul, writing after the institution, and referring to the sacrament as celebrated by himself and the other Apostles, confidently asks, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. x. 16); and we Catholics believe that it *is*; we believe that in the Sacrament of the holy Eucharist we do indeed partake or communicate in the Body and Blood of Christ. And yet once more, the same Apostle says, “He that eateth of this bread and drinketh of this cup unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor. xi. 29); and this is precisely what Catholics say of the same case; for they know that the Lord’s body is really there, and that the guilt of him who partakes of it unworthily consists in this, that he does not *discern* it, that he behaves as though it were not there, and so “is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” Protestants, on the other hand, believe that Christ did not really give bread which was His flesh, but that when He said He would do so,

He was only speaking metaphorically, making use of figures to express this simple truth, that as bread strengthens the body, so the benefits of His Passion should be the strength and support of the soul; they believe that at the last supper He gave to His Apostles not His Body and Blood, but something which should signify and represent His Body and Blood, or at least should put them in mind of it hereafter; finally, they believe that when the holy Eucharist is celebrated now, there is no actual communion of His Body and Blood, but only a commemoration, or calling to remembrance, of His death, wherein His Body was once broken and His Blood shed for our sakes.

Such is the Protestant doctrine; and whether it be true or false, at least it is clearly *not* the doctrine expressed by the letter of holy Scripture. How, then, do they justify this departure from the strict and literal meaning of our Saviour's and His Apostle's words? how do they justify the symbolical and figurative interpretation of them which they have chosen to adopt? Chiefly by such arguments as these: that the literal interpretation gives the lie to our senses, involves what is plainly impossible, namely, that Christ's body should be in several

places at once, and so on. I say that Protestants depend *chiefly* on such arguments as these, and with these of course I have nothing to do here; for I am trying Protestantism by the rule which it *professes* to follow, not by that which it really *does* follow; but they also sometimes quote a passage of holy Scripture in their behalf, and this I am bound to notice, though it is one which the most learned amongst them have long since given up and acknowledged to be useless for their purpose.

It is popularly urged, then, that the literal interpretation of the passages which have been quoted is disproved, and was indeed expressly condemned, by those words with which our Lord concluded the first discourse in which they occur, the discourse recorded in the sixth chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, in which, after having promised to His Apostles that they should eat His flesh and drink His blood, and so be completely united to Him and live forever, by and by He says, "It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Protestants maintain that in these words our Lord plainly declared that He was not speaking literally when

He talked of eating His flesh, but figuratively. It is not necessary that we should enter into an examination of the different interpretations by which it has been attempted to elicit this sense from the words in question; it will be more to the purpose to show that the sense itself is manifestly false; and this, I think, may easily be done. For consider the great opposition which was made by the Jews to every part of this discourse: when first our Lord announced that He would give them "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," they asked for a sign whereby they might believe Him, and reminded Him of the manna or bread from heaven which God had given their forefathers in the wilderness. Jesus tells them that He Himself is "the true bread which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." Then they murmured at Him for this; but again He repeats what He had said before, and explains it still more clearly by saying, that "the bread which He would give was His flesh, which He would give for the life of the world." The Jews, not content to receive this deep mystery upon the mere word of Christ, then "strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" And

once more our blessed Lord repeats His former declaration, putting it in different lights, but always inculcating in the very plainest and strongest terms the real presence of His flesh and blood in that bread which He was about to give; never for a single instant does He allow His hearers to suppose that He was to be understood otherwise than according to the literal meaning of what He said. And hence "many of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying, who can hear it? Then Jesus, knowing in Himself that His disciples murmured at it, said unto them, Doth this offend you? What, and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. Therefore say I unto you, That no man can come unto Me, except it were given unto him of My Father." Did these words remove the impression which the previous part of the discourse had created? did the people understand them, as Protestants do now, as clearing up at once all that was "*hard*" and mysterious in what had gone before? So far from it, that the very

next words which follow in the sacred narrative are these : “*From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him.*” Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” You see that spite of these words, which Protestants would fain assure us “*plainly declare* that our Lord was to be understood figuratively, not literally,” *many* of the disciples *went back and walked no more with Him*; showing thereby that they at least did not understand that the doctrine they had heard was made at all more easy by the last few words which our Lord had spoken; and when the twelve are asked whether *they* too will go away, they answer, not that they see no difficulty, nothing high and mysterious and surpassing human understanding, in the doctrine which their Master has just been teaching them; but, on the contrary, that they believe only because they are sure that He is the Son of the living God, who therefore cannot possibly be deceived Himself, and cannot possibly deceive others; and whose almighty power is perfectly able to

make good His word, and to fulfil the promise He had made them, even though it seem hard and perhaps impossible to the human understanding. Certainly nothing can be plainer than that the Protestant interpretation of these words never entered into the minds of those who heard them, whether of the many who went back, or of the few who remained faithful; and this perhaps is a sufficient demonstration that the Protestant interpretation is false, since if our Lord had really intended to remove the stumbling-block which His former expressions, being understood literally, had placed in the way of so many of His disciples, He would have chosen language that should effect that purpose; the language that he actually *did* use was as far as possible from having any such effect; we may safely conclude, therefore, that such was not its object, is not its real meaning.

But how, then, is it to be understood? what is its true connection with all that has gone before? This question more properly belongs to an instruction on the Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation than to a mere examination of one of the errors of Protestantism, which is all that is here attempted: nevertheless, for the sake of providing something positive as an

antidote to the false interpretation so current among our countrymen, it will be worth while just to state the common Catholic interpretation ; and I may as well mention, that it is the one given by an ancient Christian Bishop, who lived more than a thousand years before the Reformation ; so that you see it is no novel interpretation invented merely to contradict modern heresy, but it is what Christians in former days always supposed to be the meaning of these words, until heretics arose and taught otherwise. “ What means ‘the flesh profiteth nothing?’ ” asks St. Augustin, writing upon this very text. “ It profits nothing in the way in which they understood it ; for they imagined Him to speak of flesh as it is torn to pieces in a dead body, or as it is sold in the shambles, and not as it is animated by the spirit. Wherefore it is said, ‘the flesh profiteth nothing,’ just in the same way as it is said elsewhere, ‘knowledge puffeth up’ (1 Cor. viii. 1). Does it follow, then, from these words, that we must hate knowledge ? far from it. What then is meant by saying that ‘knowledge puffeth up?’ It does so when it stands alone, without charity ; therefore the Apostle immediately adds, ‘but charity edifieth.’ Add to

knowledge charity, and then knowledge will be useful, not by itself, but through charity. So here also, ‘the flesh profiteth nothing,’ that is, the flesh *alone*; but let the spirit be joined to the flesh, as charity to knowledge, and it profits very much.”

The flesh separated from the spirit would profit nothing; but Catholics do not believe that in the holy Eucharist Christ’s flesh is separated from his spirit; on the contrary, they expressly teach, that in that blessed sacrament is contained the Body and Blood of Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity: and this, as St. Augustin so clearly explains, is altogether a different thing. The Jews understood our Lord to say, that they were really to receive His flesh and blood; but they imagined that it was to be after the same gross and carnal manner in which ordinary food is taken and consumed. In the first part of this belief they were right, and our Lord says nothing whatever to contradict it; and because He says nothing, many even of those who had been His disciples “go back, and walk no more with Him;” but to correct the other part, in which they were mistaken, namely, as to the *manner* of receiving it, He speaks of His Ascension,

in which His Body should be taken up whole and entire into heaven ; and He goes on to tell them that the Body they should receive in the blessed sacrament of which He had spoken was to be, not a carnal, but a spiritual Body ; it was to be His flesh united with His spirit, and animated by it. He does *not* tell them, and none but Protestants have ever imagined that He told them, that what they should receive would not be His body nor His flesh at all, for that He had only been speaking figuratively about the necessity of believing in Him, and receiving His doctrine ; and therefore His explanation did not satisfy those who would not believe ; and Christ knew and said that it would not satisfy them : "there are some of you that believe not." Had His words taken away the mystery, those who had already been His disciples would have had no difficulty in believing ; but because they did *not* remove the mystery, but rather added another and a still higher mystery, therefore "they went back, and walked no more with Him."

Hitherto we have spoken only of those sacraments which Protestantism has at least professed to retain ; though, by emptying them of those high and precious gifts which the Word

of God and the Church assign to them, it has made them to appear unmeaning and almost useless ordinances. It remains for us yet to say something about "those other five, commonly called Sacraments," which the Reformers so unceremoniously rejected.

The account of these ordinances which is given by the Protestant Establishment of this country is this: that "they have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God." I suppose that the latter branch of this division, "partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures," is meant to refer to Matrimony; and that the rest, Confirmation, Penance, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction, are what "have grown of the corrupt following of the apostles." We will first say a few words, therefore, about Matrimony, and then go on to speak of the other four.

Now, although Protestants will not allow that Matrimony has been raised by Jesus Christ from a mere civil contract to the dignity of a Christian sacrament, yet they themselves believe

that *some* important change was made by Him in its character and obligations ; that He raised it above what it had been before : but a portion at least of their belief on this subject is not warranted by any express declaration of Holy Scripture. Protestants do not believe that marriage is precisely the same thing now that it was before the coming of Christ ; for under the law of Moses the Jews were allowed to have more wives than one at the same time : and, moreover, the husband and wife were in several cases allowed to separate from one another, and to marry other persons. Now, in both these respects, no persons professing themselves to be Christians, consider that the Christian of the present day has the same license that the Jew had then. And why not, except because they believe that Jesus Christ has, in some way or other, changed the character and obligations of this contract between a man and his wife ? But how and when did He change it ? Upon the second of these points, Protestants, who profess to go by the Bible, and the Bible only, can refer to His words recorded by St. Matthew (xix. 5) and by St. Mark (x. 7), where, after having repeated that saying of Adam when the first woman was made, “Therefore shall a man

leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. ii. 24), He immediately adds, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." And then, in answer to a question proposed by some of His hearers about the law of Moses upon this subject of divorce, He goes on distinctly to abrogate that law, and to lay down a much higher and stricter law. I say nothing at present as to whether Protestants understand this law aright, and whether they practise it or not; at any rate, they allow that a new law *was* instituted, exalting in this particular the character of Matrimony, by making it an indissoluble contract; that is, a contract which, when once made, could never be broken except by the death of one or other of the parties; and so far, at least, they can allege the authority of the written Word of God for what they say. They can prove from the very letter of Holy Writ, that whereas before the coming of Christ, marriage was a contract which could be dissolved for various causes, now it could no longer be dissolved. But as to the other change in its obligations—that a man cannot

enter into this contract with more than one woman at a time—where is the scriptural authority for this most important law? This was not the practice of the patriarchs; it was not ordained by the law of Moses. By what authority, then, do Protestants insist upon it? Where is the text of Scripture that enjoins it? Sometimes, indeed, they quote the words of St. Paul to Timothy, in which it is stated that “a bishop should be the husband of one wife;” and the same is repeated also concerning a deacon (1 Tim. iii. 2, 12).* But this does not prove that the same obligation is binding also upon the laity: on the contrary, Protestants have been found before now who have drawn from these same passages the very opposite conclusion—namely, that bigamy is not sinful in an ordinary Christian, because it is expressly forbidden only in the clergy. It is only natural, they have said, that something more should be required of the clergy than of the people: St. Paul requires of the clergy that they should have but one wife; it is clear, therefore, that it

* The meaning of these sentences is, not that every bishop and deacon must have a wife (for St. Paul himself had none), but that no one should be admitted to holy orders, either as bishop, priest, or deacon, who had been married more than once.

is allowable to the people to have more than one. This was their argument; neither is it possible, by any text of Scripture, to refute them. Whatever Protestants may say, therefore, they do, in point of fact, believe that Christ has altered the laws of Matrimony in a very important particular not mentioned in Holy Writ.

All this, however, you will say, does not prove that the Catholic Church is right in calling Matrimony a Christian sacrament. Of course it does not; but this is not my purpose. I have said again and again, and I cannot repeat it too often, that I have not undertaken in these pages to prove the truth of the Catholic doctrine upon this or any other subject. I am only questioning Protestantism, and trying certain portions of it by its own standard, the written Word of God; and I say that, upon this subject of Matrimony, Protestants believe a most important truth which that standard does not warrant them in believing. They agree with Catholics in looking upon marriage as something higher and more noble now than it was under the Jewish law, inasmuch as it is now indissoluble, and then it was not; now it can be contracted with but one person only:

then it could be contracted with several. But for this last assertion they cannot give any authority from the Bible, and they will not allow the authority of any thing else. Of course we Catholics believe it on the authority of the Church, which is "the pillar and ground of the truth," and which has always so believed and so taught; but then we believe also, on the same authority, that Matrimony is no longer a mere civil contract, but that it has been raised by Christ to be a sacred mystery, signifying the inseparable union between Himself and His Church (Eph. v. 31), and that there are annexed to it, by His appointment, certain special graces, to enable those who undertake it, worthily to fulfil its duties; in other words, we believe that it is a Christian sacrament.

We believe also that there are four other sacraments instituted by Christ, which Protestants reject, and concerning which they tell us that they "have grown out of a corrupt following of the Apostles." What do they mean by "a corrupt following of the Apostles?" I suppose they will allow that the Apostles themselves followed Christ; did what He bade them; used those ordinances and taught those doctrines which He had commanded them; and,

I suppose they will allow also that we shall not do wrong if we follow the Apostles: indeed, St. Paul expressly exhorts his Corinthian converts, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 1). If, then, in these four sacraments we have followed the Apostles, and "kept the ordinances as they delivered them to us," wherein have we done wrong? what does the "corruption" consist in? Or, rather (to put the question in its proper form), if in these four sacraments Protestants have ceased to follow the Apostles and to keep the ordinances which they delivered, have they not thereby ceased to follow Christ? have they not been guilty of wilful disobedience to His commands? We have to inquire, therefore, how far Protestants can be said to go by the Bible, when they reject the Sacraments of Confirmation, Penance, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction.

And first, of Confirmation. We read in the Acts of the Apostles (viii. 5-17) that Philip, one of the seven deacons, "went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them; and that the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, and believed him, and were baptized, both men and

women. Then, when the Apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John." And why were these Apostles sent? what were they to do that Philip could not do? The sacred historian goes on to tell us that, when they were come down, "they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for as yet He was fallen upon none of them, only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." You see, then, that the Apostles were sent down to confer upon the newly-baptized converts the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that this was done by prayer and the laying on of hands. We are expressly told too, that "Simon saw that, by the imposition of the hands of the Apostles, the Holy Ghost was given." Here, surely, is an outward and visible sign—"the imposition," or laying on, "of the hands of the Apostles;" there is also an inward and spiritual grace—even the gift of the Holy Ghost; and this outward sign and inward grace are most intimately connected together; the inward grace is given *by means* of the outward sign.

What do Protestants understand by this?

why do they not keep this ordinance as the Apostles delivered it? will they say that it was only an extraordinary ordinance, necessary in those days, but not designed to be continued till the end of the world? Where is the scriptural authority for such a statement? These people of Samaria had been baptized; they also believed; what more was wanting? According to the Protestant creed, one cannot see that any thing was wanting; but the Catholic understands that they had not yet received that particular strength and those special graces, those gifts of the Holy Ghost, which Christ ordained should be given in the Sacrament of Confirmation, which sacrament could only be conferred by the higher order of the clergy. Philip the deacon could baptize, but he could not confirm; for this sacrament it was necessary that the Apostles, Peter and John, should come down from Jerusalem.

Some Protestants, however,—those who have retained episcopacy,—have retained the rite of Confirmation, though they refuse it the name of a sacrament; and they give as their reason for this refusal, that it has “no visible sign or ceremony ordained of God.” But first, I would beg such persons to consider well what they

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read in their own Bibles, namely, that the “laying on of hands” is one of “the principles of the doctrine of Christ.” It is distinctly mentioned by St. Paul under this title (Heb. vi. 2), together “with the doctrine of baptisms, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.” If *these* doctrines, then, were doctrines taught by Jesus Christ,—and no one, I presume, will deny but that it can be proved by Holy Writ that He *did* teach both “the doctrine of baptisms, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment,”—how can it be pretended that He did not also teach the doctrine of “laying on of hands?” I grant it is nowhere recorded in the Gospels; but we are told in the Gospels that when Jesus spake unto His Apostles before He was taken up from them into heaven, He bade them go and teach all nations, “teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you; and then we find in the Acts of the Apostles and in their epistles, first, two of the Apostles administering this sacrament, and then a third, who “neither received the Gospel of man, neither was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. i. 12), expressly declaring that it is one of “the principles of the doctrine

of Christ." What more can possibly be required to show that it was indeed ordained by Christ Himself, even as the Sacrament of Baptism was?

But secondly, I would observe also, what surely no one will deny when once he has seriously reflected upon the matter, namely, that whatever the Apostles might do, whatever outward ceremonies they might enjoin for convenience' sake, or for any other motive, they could not possibly annex grace to those acts or ceremonies: this could only be done by Jesus Christ Himself, by whom "grace and truth came" (St. John i. 17), and who could of course distribute the gifts of grace when and as He willed. Whenever, therefore, it is clear from Holy Scripture that any inward grace accompanies any outward sign, this can only be by the special appointment of Christ; and we are warranted in concluding at once concerning that ordinance in which we see these two parts thus intimately united,—an inward grace conveyed by means of an outward and visible sign,—that it was ordained by Christ Himself.

It is plain, then, that Protestantism, when weighed in the balance which alone it professes to use, the balance of Holy Scripture, is found

manifestly wanting on this subject of the Sacrament of Confirmation. If we are to go by the testimony of Holy Writ, Confirmation is a sacrament precisely in the same way as Baptism and the Holy Eucharist are sacraments.

Next, let us pass on to the consideration of another ordinance recognized as a sacrament by the Catholic Church, but the very name of which has been almost lost among Protestants, or known only to be vilified and condemned, the Sacrament of Penance. As I am not now explaining the Catholic doctrine, I need not enter at length into a discussion of all the parts of this sacrament; I will speak only of that part which was most strongly protested against by the Reformers, and is still most loudly denounced by their disciples, namely, the absolution given by the priest. Of course, they object also to the practice of Confession, that men should go and reveal their most secret faults, their sins of thought and word and deed, to a mere man like themselves; but since the words of St. James (v. 16) are express upon this point, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed," they dare not object to this practice in itself, but only in the end or purpose for which Catholics

use it. They will allow that confession may be salutary as an act of voluntary humiliation, or useful as giving our neighbor a more intimate knowledge of our real character, and so making his prayers and other charitable efforts in our behalf more efficacious; but what they will not allow, what they cannot bear even to hear spoken of, is, that men should confess their sins to a priest in order to be absolved from them. The doctrine that one man can absolve another from his sins, so as to clear the sinner from all guilt in the sight of God, is denounced by Protestants in language such as one hardly dare repeat, considering that it is really spoken against an ordinance of Christ's own appointment. When our blessed Lord said to the man sick of the palsy, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee," certain of the scribes said within themselves, "This man blasphemeth" (St. Matt. ix. 2, 3). And so when a priest, acting by the authority of Jesus Christ and in His sacred name, uses the same language at the present day to some suffering soul sick with the palsy of sin, he too is accused of presumption, irreverence, and blasphemy. Yet where can words be found more distinctly conferring this power upon certain individuals,

than those words of our Lord after His resurrection, addressed not to the whole of His flock generally, but specially to His chosen Apostles? "Jesus said to them, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained" (St. John xx. 21-23). It is true indeed that these words were first spoken only to the Apostles, and that it is not expressly declared that the same privilege was to be continued to those who should come after them; but what Protestants renounce is the general doctrine that man ever *could* receive such a power over the souls and consciences of his fellow-men; and if it be true that the Apostles *did* receive it, of course there is no reason why others, their successors, should not receive it also. Moreover, in like manner, our Lord nowhere distinctly said concerning the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, that those who came after the Apostles were to administer it as well as the Apostles themselves; His only words were, "Do this in remembrance of Me;" and yet no one doubts but that that sacrament

was instituted for the benefit of all who should belong to Christ's flock even to the end of the world, and that those therefore who came after the Apostles, and occupied their place, had the power of administering that sacrament quite as much as the Apostles themselves. So here too, since the forgiveness of sins is a thing which concerns every Christian soul to the end of time, this power given to the Apostles of remitting and retaining them was no personal grant to themselves, for their own sakes and to increase their authority, but for the sake of the whole Church, and was to last as long as the Church should last.

Absolution pronounced by a certain human tribunal receiving special authority for this purpose from Jesus Christ Himself, was once the appointed means for obtaining the remission of sins : "whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ;" it cannot be shown from Holy Scripture that this institution was ever abrogated, and another substituted in its place ; it remains therefore in full and undiminished force to all those who honestly desire to shape their belief by what is taught in Holy Scripture.

But then the question immediately suggests

itself, Where is now that human tribunal invested with this high and precious privilege? The Apostles were the first to receive it; who have inherited it from them? In other words, Who are the successors of the Apostles? It is the doctrine of the Church that Holy Orders is a sacrament by which the ministers of the Church are ordained, and receive power and grace to perform their sacred duties. Protestants, on the other hand, believe either that there are no ministers of the Church at all, none whose duty and calling it is to preach and administer the sacraments to others; or that men are set apart for these purposes by a special inward call from Almighty God, without the intervention of any outward and visible sign whatever; or again, that it is a proper and becoming arrangement for mere convenience' sake, and that all things may be done "decently and in order," that certain men should be given up to the performance of these duties, and so that these men should be called and appointed by persons having authority to this end; but they do not believe that Christ has annexed to this outward and visible calling, any inward and spiritual grace: only Catholics believe that Holy Orders is a Christian sacra-

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ment, having both an outward sign *and* an inward grace. Now let us see how far the Protestant doctrine is borne out by Holy Writ; let us see whether it does not overlook and set at naught certain very clear declarations contained in the Word of God.

We read in the Acts of the Apostles (xiii. 1-4), that "as certain prophets and teachers in the Church that was at Antioch were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed," and went about to divers cities preaching the Word of God. You see that even after the Holy Ghost had called them, it was still necessary that the prophets and teachers of the Church should fast and pray, and lay their hands upon them, and that when they had done this and sent them away, the inspired writer declares that they were sent forth by the Holy Ghost. But not only did Barnabas and Saul, when thus sent, preach the Gospel in the various cities which they visited, they also took the necessary measures for providing for the



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future edification of those souls whom they converted to the faith. When they were themselves about to take their departure and to return to Antioch, they "prayed with fasting, and ordained elders in every church" (Acts xiv. 23). Moreover, St. Paul, in addressing some of these elders thus ordained, tells them that they were "appointed by the Holy Ghost as overseers to feed the Church of God," and bids them take heed to the flock committed to their charge (Acts xx. 28).

These notices alone should be sufficient to make any really attentive and devout student of Holy Scripture think twice before he rejected the Sacrament of Holy Orders; before he determined that the setting apart of certain persons "to feed the Church of God" was an act for which no outward and visible sign had been appointed by the Divine Head of the Church, or to which no inward and spiritual grace was attached. But this is not all; there are other still more explicit declarations of Holy Scripture which the Protestant doctrine upon this subject passes by and leaves without a meaning. St. Paul, writing to his own dearly-beloved son Timothy, whom he had himself ordained and set apart to be a "steward of



God's mysteries," uses these words: "Neglect not the gift that is in thee"—here we have the inward grace that was given—"which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery"—here we have the outward sign by which the gift was given (1 Tim. iv. 14). Again: in a second letter from the same to the same (i. 6), we read: "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee"—behold the inward grace—"by the putting on of my hands"—behold the outward sign, at the application or putting on of which that inward grace was conferred. The Catholic Church at the days of the Reformation used this very same outward sign, and taught (as she had ever taught from the days of St. Paul and St. Timothy, and as she still teaches) that the very same inward grace always accompanied the sign. Protestants said otherwise, and rejected the sacrament; but where did they find a single text in Scripture to justify them in so doing? where has the Bible said, that after the close of the Apostolic age, or at the end of so many centuries, men should no longer be set apart for the ministry of the word and sacraments by some outward and visible sign, and should not receive any

special gift or grace qualifying them for the due discharge of their high and important duties, or that the outward sign should be changed, or that the grace should no longer accompany the sign, but be altogether distinct from it? Where, I say, does the Bible teach us any such doctrine as this? or any thing at all like it, whereby Protestants, professing to go by the Bible, and the Bible only, may be justified in denying and rejecting the Sacrament of Holy Orders?

And now, in conclusion, we come to the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, or *last sacrament*, as it is commonly called, because it is given as it were on the very confines of this earth, and within view of the judgment-seat of Christ. The Church administers this sacrament to dying persons, to strengthen them in their passage out of this world into the next, and teaches both that it imparts grace for the forgiveness of sins, and also that in certain cases, where God so wills, it restores health. Protestants, however, boasting of their obedience to the written Word of God, despise and reject this sacrament, not only denying that it has any right to be considered as a sacrament, but also setting it aside altogether, and never taking

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any notice of it at all. And yet, according to that Word, there is certainly no sacrament which can be more manifestly proved to be a true sacrament than this, both in regard to the outward or visible sign, and in regard to the inward or spiritual grace. For we read in the Epistle of St. James (v. 14), "Is any man sick among you? let him call for the elders (or the priests) of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord"—behold here the outward and visible sign of this Sacrament—"and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him"—behold here the inward and spiritual grace annexed to the outward sign. Now what interpretation do Protestants put upon these words? How do they comply with them? They contain a plain injunction about a very plain matter, what a Christian man ought to do when he is sick; and there is not so much as a hint that this injunction is of a merely temporary nature. It follows immediately upon another very plain and simple direction, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry, let him sing psalms." Protestants do not doubt, I sup-

pose, but that *these* injunctions at least were written for their instruction, and have just as much force now as they had when St. James first wrote them. They do not doubt but that prayer is their surest refuge and most fitting occupation in time of trouble; and that when they are in peace and prosperity, they ought to thank God for it, and to praise His holy name with psalms of thanksgiving. Why will they not believe also that when sickness falls upon them, they ought to send for the elders of the Church to come and pray over them, and anoint them with holy oil, and that a blessing, both spiritual and temporal, is by God's word promised to attend upon this holy ordinance? There is precisely the same warrant for this last duty as there is for the other two. God, by the mouth of His servant St. James, has vouchsafed to give all three commandments with the very same breath, if I may so speak. How dare a man to accept two, and then turn a deaf ear to the third? There is no difference between the three as they stand written in the sacred page; whence comes this difference in the Protestant mode of dealing with them?

Surely, if any consideration could be supposed to justify our setting a difference between

one of these commandments and another, it would be entirely in favor of the commandment which enjoins this practice of Extreme Unction over the other two. For should we give way to impatient complaining or to despair in a time of affliction, or be so carried away by some unexpected joy as for a while to forget God, we might at least hope that, when the excess of the sorrow or the joy had somewhat abated, we should be awakened to a sense of our fault, and obtain its forgiveness by a sincere and hearty repentance: but any error or omission of duty in a time of sickness is specially dangerous, because the sickness may end in death, and we can only die once, so that there may be no opportunity for repentance; it will be too late after death to correct what was wrong, or to supply what was wanting.

Most earnestly, then, would I beg of all Protestants with reference to this sacrament, that they should propose to themselves with the utmost seriousness this one question: Is there any time in which it is of more consequence to me that I should have a good, secure, and unquestionable warrant, such as God's Word alone can give, for the forgiveness of my sins, than the time of my departure out of this

world? Behold, then, here is an appointed means for obtaining that forgiveness, even at this very time, the time of death; and this means is warranted to me by the express word of God. How dare I then, without *any* ground at all in God's word, reject a thing so important to every Christian as this last sacrament, and that, too, when the practice of the whole of Christendom at the time of the (so-called) Reformation was in exact literal accordance with the command of St. James? How ill does this agree with the Protestant profession of reforming all errors only according to the rule of Holy Scripture!

You will say, perhaps, that, whatever these words may mean, there is at any rate nothing revealed about its being a sacrament ordained by Christ; and I might answer, as I have already done in the case of Confirmation, who but He could have annexed the gift of invisible grace, the remission of sins, to the visible sign of anointing with oil, which yet this passage most distinctly testifies really was so annexed? On what authority, short of that of his Divine Lord and Master, could St. James have dared to give such a charge as this to the people, and to make them so solemn an assurance of the

blessing that would accompany its observance? But I content myself with remarking, what is sufficient for my present purpose, and what I beseech you to make the subject of the most earnest meditation, that whereas you profess to go by the plain meaning of Scripture, and to obey its injunctions, you literally take no notice whatever of this command, any more than if it had never been written. You may be right or you may be wrong in neglecting this passage; that is not the point about which I am inquiring. You are certainly inconsistent; this is what I desire to impress upon you. You are not abiding by the rule which you profess to follow; you are guilty of a flagrant violation of it. You are going against the teaching of the Bible, and following a tradition which was begun three hundred years ago by the (so-called) Reformers; and any one who *really* goes only by what the Bible tells him, could not hesitate to say of you, that by so doing you "have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." This, however, is more than I have here undertaken to prove; and I hope I have said enough already to satisfy you that you are not really rendering a willing obedience to the simple Word of God

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when you denounce as blasphemy the doctrine that a man may have power to "remit sins," when you deny that a "gift of God" is conferred upon the stewards of His mysteries by "the laying on of the hands of the presbytery," or when you ridicule the sick man who calls for the Elders of the Church to come and "pray over him and anoint him with oil," believing that thereby "the prayer of faith shall save him, and the Lord shall raise him up; and that if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him."

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PURGATORY.

THE Catholic doctrine concerning Purgatory may be briefly stated thus: that Almighty God has appointed in the next world a third place, which is neither heaven nor hell, but a *middle* place, as it is called, in which certain souls, who will in the end go to heaven, are for a while detained: We believe that some souls, the souls of little children, for instance, who have been made members of Christ's Church by holy Baptism; or of others who, by God's grace, have been enabled to preserve through life the purity and innocence of children; or of others, again, who, by the help of the same grace, have, by their sufferings or acts of voluntary penance satisfied God's justice for the *temporal* punishment due for the sins of their past life,—are received by Almighty God, as soon as they have left the body, into the enjoyment of everlasting

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bliss. In like manner, we believe that there are other souls which pass at once out of this world into the realms of everlasting torment in the next. But we believe also that there are many others which, although not destined to receive eternal punishment, are yet not fit for immediate admission into that place into which "there shall not enter any thing that is defiled" (Apoc. xxi. 27). For when we consider the carelessness of the majority of men, their want of rigid self-examination and blindness to their own faults, we can readily understand how the multitude of ordinary good persons may commit a thousand sins—not indeed grievous sins, yet sins for which they shall have to "render an account in the day of judgment," such as "idle words," for example (St. Matt. xii. 36)—for which they never feel compunction, nor ask forgiveness of God. Concerning many souls, therefore, although we dare not hope that, at the moment of their passage out of this world, they are so free from all spot and stain of sin as to be ready to pass immediately into the presence of that Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, there to dwell with Him at once and for ever; yet we feel confident that they have departed in the grace and favor

of God, and that their everlasting lot therefore will not be cast among liars, and blasphemers, and idolaters, "in the pool of fire, there to be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Apoc. xx. 10). And we believe that the mercy • and justice of God, in His dealings with these souls, are reconciled by their being detained for a certain time in a middle place, there to be punished and purified, and dealt with according to His good pleasure, until He sees fit to admit them to the enjoyment of that beatific vision which is life and bliss everlasting.

It is also a part of Catholic belief that even when Almighty God has forgiven sin and justified the repentant sinner, so that he is once more in a state of grace, He still reserves the infliction of some degree of punishment for his transgressions, as we see in the instance of the royal penitent David. At the very same moment that he was assured by the mouth of the prophet that his sin was forgiven, "the Lord hath taken away thy sin," he was also told that he would yet suffer a certain punishment for that sin; "nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (2 Kings xii. 14). Again, some

time afterwards, when the same David had sinned by vanity and pride in numbering the people of Israel, no sooner had he done so than "his heart struck him;" he confessed that he had "sinned very much in what he had done," and he prayed God that He would "take away his iniquity" (2 Kings xxiv. 10); and no one doubts but that the Lord heard this prayer, and forgave the sin; nevertheless, He sent a very severe punishment for it both upon the king and upon his people. We believe, then, that this is God's law in dealing with the children of men; that when, for Christ's sake, He forgives sin, and absolves the sinner from its guilt and the eternal punishment which was its due, He yet reserves some smaller punishments to be undergone by the sinner, either in this world or in the next; and thus that souls which leave this world in a state of grace and friendship with God, may yet be detained for a certain time from the enjoyment of their everlasting reward, because they have not yet paid this debt of temporal punishment due to their sins. And when we speak of souls being *purified* by the sufferings of Purgatory, we mean, not that they are thus cleansed from the *guilt* of their sins, but only that they are paying this debt of

punishment. For no mere suffering can ever take away sin; true contrition and change of heart alone can effect this through the merits of Jesus Christ. No sin, however small, is forgiven without repentance; those souls, then, who leave this life with venial sins unrepented of, obtain the remission of the guilt of them by the first act of contrition and love which they make on their separation from the body. But since that act is the effect of the pure bounty of God, and is not performed in a state of probation, it is just that they should suffer for their neglect in not repenting before death.

This, then, is the Catholic doctrine about Purgatory, which we have not attempted to *prove* to you, but simply to state; and if you ask on what authority we believe this doctrine, we must answer, on the same authority on which we believe all the other articles of the Christian faith, viz., on the authority of the Church, "the pillar and ground of the truth," which was divinely commissioned to teach the faith to all nations, and has from the beginning taught this doctrine about Purgatory among the rest. In the following pages, however, we are not going to prove this point, that a belief in Purgatory has always been a part of the

Christian faith, nor yet to show how fully this doctrine coincides both with all that we should naturally conceive of the justice and goodness of God, and all that we know from revelation about other portions of Catholic doctrine. No doubt this would be a very interesting and useful work; but at present we must confine ourselves to the plan we have followed in the other tracts of this series; and having first explained what the Catholic belief on this subject really is, we must now proceed to inquire how far Protestants are able to justify their rejection of this belief by an appeal to their professed standard of truth, the written word of God. Observe, then, that we are not setting about to prove the Catholic doctrine by texts of Scripture, or even to insist that the passages of Scripture which we shall quote contain or imply that doctrine, but only to inquire whether there are not certain portions of the Bible which Protestants are obliged to do violence to, or to pass by altogether, in consequence of their disbelief of this doctrine.

1. First, then, we would ask, if there be only two places, or states of souls, in the invisible world, heaven and hell, what do Protestants understand by those words of St. Peter (i. 3, 19),

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wherein he tells us that our Lord, after His crucifixion, went in the spirit and "preached to those spirits that were in prison, which had been some time incredulous, when they waited for the patience of God in the days of Noe?" Where was this prison? It could not have been heaven that is called by this name; for the name necessarily implies a certain idea of punishment; neither could it have been the prison of hell; for wherefore should Christ preach to persons who were already condemned, and condemned for ever and ever without any hope or possibility of release? What, then, was this prison, in which souls were being then detained which had left this world of ours so many hundred years before, and yet were neither in heaven nor in hell? This is a question which no Catholic has any difficulty in answering, but which must needs be a cause of great perplexity to persons professing to receive "the whole Bible," and yet refusing to believe in the existence of any intermediate place between the abode of everlasting happiness on the one hand, and that of everlasting misery on the other.

2. But there is another text also which speaks of "a prison," and this too is not an everlasting prison, but one from which persons

may be delivered on the fulfilment of certain conditions. We refer to those words of our Lord recorded in the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke (St. Matt. v. 25, 26; St. Luke xii. 58, 59): "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing." Now Protestant commentators agree with Catholics in applying these words to the necessity of effecting our reconciliation with God during this life. "Whilst we are in the way," they interpret of this mortal life, during which we are on our way to the judgment-seat of Christ; but the only "prison" whose existence they recognize in the next world is the prison-house of hell, and from this there is no rescue, no redemption; whereas the passage before us clearly sets a period to the imprisonment, and says, "Thou shalt not come out till thou hast paid the last farthing." It speaks, then, not of the prison of hell, but of some other prison from which persons are finally delivered; when they have suffered all the punishment due to their sins. To grievous sins

unrepented of and unforgiven, eternal punishment is due; and for these, therefore, "the last farthing" can never be paid. Of what, then, does our Lord here speak, but either of lesser sins, to which a lesser punishment is due, or else of that lesser degree of punishment, that *temporary* punishment, which has been already mentioned as part of the penalty of sin which the sinner is made to pay even when the guilt of his sin and its eternal punishment has been remitted to him? In either of these cases, when the debt of punishment is paid in the prison of purgatory, the soul is released and goes to heaven; and with this interpretation, therefore, the whole passage becomes clear and forcible, and the last clause of it is as easy to be understood as every other; whereas Protestants, on the other hand, are obliged to pass over this last clause altogether, or to treat it as though it was equivalent to saying that the person spoken of would never come out of prison at all.

3. Nor are these the only words spoken by our blessed Lord, to which, in consequence of their denial of the doctrine of Purgatory, they are driven to do violence, and to pretend that they mean something different from what they say. It is precisely thus that they treat those

words addressed to the Pharisees, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but he that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, *neither in this world nor in the world to come*" (St. Matt. xii. 32). Protestants have not hesitated to say, that these last words are redundant, that they have no distinct meaning, but might very well have been omitted. Indeed, how was it possible for them to say any thing else, seeing that they do not believe that any sins at all, neither slight sins nor grievous sins, are ever forgiven in the world to come? Far different were the thoughts of St. Augustine, a great Christian saint and bishop, who lived more than 1400 years ago: "Surely," he says, "these words would never have been spoken, had there not been some sins which would be forgiven in the next world, even though they had not been forgiven in this." And this is just what Catholics believe; they believe that grievous and mortal sins can only be forgiven to the sinner whilst he is yet alive and heartily repentant of his sin; but that a Christian soul habitually serving God, yet falling also into some of those lesser faults of which St. James speaks when he says that "in many

things we offend all," and then cut off from all opportunity of doing penance for them, by sudden death, for example, or in any other way, will nevertheless receive forgiveness of those sins after its separation from the body. Protestants deny this doctrine, for they only believe in the existence of two states of souls after death, either in heaven or in hell; in the first of these nothing can ever enter that stands in need of forgiveness; in the last, sins are only punished, not forgiven. It remains, then, that there is no forgiveness of sins in the next world, and therefore no meaning in those words which we have quoted, even though they are the words of Him who most emphatically declared that though "heaven and earth should pass away, His word should *not* pass away" (St. Mark xiii. 31).

4. There is yet another text also which must not be omitted whilst we are speaking of violence done to the written word of God by persons denying the existence of Purgatory. It is this: "Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall

try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward; if any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 12-15). Now although it is not at all essential for our belief that this text should be shown to refer to the doctrine of Purgatory, and to nothing else,—because, as has been already so often said, we do not profess to have extracted our creed from the Bible, nor even that every article of our creed is clearly to be found there—yet it is essential for the Protestant that he should be able to supply some other interpretation of the passage which, without doing violence to the sacred text, shall yet not include the idea of Purgatory, because he professes not only to reject every Christian doctrine which is not in the Bible, but also to receive every doctrine that is there; and therefore he is not at liberty to pass this text by, and to take no account of it, just as though it had never been written; he must give it a place and a meaning in his system of belief. What doctrine then is there which is held by Protestants which really does give a sense and an explanation to the passage we have quoted? We

know of none, and can find none in any of their commentators. “Gold, silver, and precious stones,” they may interpret, with Catholic doctors, of good works built on the one only abiding foundation, of faith in Christ Jesus our Lord; but what do they understand by the “wood, hay, and stubble?” They *may* not understand evil deeds and transgressions of God’s commandments, because, though these, when “tried by the fire in the day of the Lord,” will “burn,” yet, according to Protestant theology, the doers of them will suffer, *not* mere “loss,” but eternal punishment, and they will therefore not be “*saved* as by fire,” but rather will suffer in fire for ever and ever. Protestants do not recognize the distinction with which we are so familiar between mortal and venial sins, neither do they believe in the existence of any place of temporary probation, where these smaller daily transgressions may be punished, yet the doers of them be eventually “*saved*;” and under these circumstances, the language of St. Paul in this place becomes a real difficulty to them; it conveys no idea, imparts no instruction; it is not “profitable” either “to teach, to reprove, to correct, or to instruct in justice” (2 Tim. iii. 16); it is simply unintelligible: to a Catholic, on the

other hand, it conveys precisely the same doctrine which he has been always taught from his infancy ; it harmonizes with all that he has ever heard and learnt and believed about a purgation by fire after death, whereby satisfaction is made to God for sins not sufficiently expiated during life.

Other passages might be quoted both from the Old and New Testaments, bearing upon this very interesting and important question ; but what we have said must surely be enough to suggest to the mind of any thoughtful Protestant a very grave suspicion whether the system of doctrine which he has been taught really embraces, as it professes to do, the *whole* Bible ; and if it does not do this, how can any man who values that sacred book, and believes it to contain the revelation of God, be contented to put up with a system so manifestly imperfect, and to trust to it his hopes of salvation ? What God has revealed, man must believe, if he desires to be saved ; the *whole* of God's revelation, neither more nor less. If, then, you are satisfied that the Bible contains the whole of that revelation, and that there is nothing which you ought to know or believe but what may be found there, you ought at least to be very care-

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ful in ascertaining what its contents really are, and that there is not a single portion of them which does not find its proper place somewhere in your creed. You are not at liberty to say or to think about any portion of it, "This is of no importance; it may be a part of God's revelation, or it may not, but in either case it is of no real consequence; even though God has revealed it, it is not necessary that we should believe it." To argue thus is to set yourself up above God, to submit His divine word to your own private conceits, and *not* to receive but to *mutilate* His revelation. Yet this is what Protestants are really guilty of, when they are contented to pass by and utterly neglect passages of Holy Scripture like those which have been quoted in the present tract. It is nothing to the purpose to say that the name of purgatory is never so much as once mentioned in these passages, and that the idea of it, as it has been here explained, is nowhere clearly expounded, or even necessarily implied in them. We have not pretended that it is. We stated and explained to you the doctrine of Purgatory, only that you might have an opportunity of seeing whether that doctrine does not supply a key to the right interpretation of the passages in ques-

tion; but our main object has been to urge upon you this very important consideration, that *Protestantism has no doctrine which gives any interpretation of them at all*. To Protestants, these passages are mere words, and nothing else; and as long as this is the case, they cannot truly be said to receive the *whole Bible*; there are certain portions of it which, if they do not positively reject and expunge from the sacred text, yet they certainly set aside and practically disregard.

And this is the truth which we have been endeavoring to establish throughout the whole series of tracts of which this is the conclusion. As we said at the beginning, the Protestants' rule of faith is negative rather than positive; it insists upon *the Bible only*, to the exclusion of every thing else, but it is not equally jealous about receiving *the whole Bible*, every part of it. And the consequence is, that they really treat the Bible with extreme irreverence; they pick out a certain number of books, or chapters of books, or even single verses, and practically treat these fragments as though they were the whole. They first arbitrarily decide for themselves that these particular portions are the most important in the book; and then draw

the further conclusion that the other portions are of no real importance at all. In their extreme anxiety to escape from certain portions of this book which seem to be opposed to particular articles of their own creed, they so handle them as in fact flatly to contradict them; whilst of others they are contented to make no use whatever, but to leave them, like words in an unknown tongue, without any meaning at all. Instances of the former kind we have seen in their mode of handling the words of our Lord and His Apostles, whenever they speak of men being sent with authority to teach the Gospel even as Christ had been sent by his Father, and of there being a succession of these "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also," even to the end of the world; of the duty of hearing the Church, and of holding traditions, whether written or unwritten, and of the Church being "the pillar and ground of the truth." We have seen, I say, in the first and second tracts of this series, how the Protestant attempts to explain away such passages as these are in fact nothing more nor less than a *denial* of them all. In the later tracts we have seen how the same may be said also of the Protestant interpretation of the language, both of Christ and of

His Apostles, concerning the Sacraments of Baptism and of the holy Eucharist; how they do not believe that we are born again of water and of the Holy Spirit, but of the Holy Spirit only; nor that sins are washed away by baptism, and that it is necessary that we should be baptized for the remission of our sins, as St. Peter assured the assembled multitudes on the day of Pentecost, and as Ananias, a messenger sent by God, told St. Paul. Neither do they believe that when our Lord said "This is My body—this is My blood," that it really *was* His body and His blood; nor yet that the bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ, though St. Paul says that it is. All this they emphatically deny. We have seen, too, how utterly they disregard the distinct declaration of St. James concerning the sacrament of extreme unction; and how they refuse to believe that any "gift of God" is imparted by "the laying on of hands" in the sacrament of holy orders, though St. Paul told St. Timothy that there was; or that Christ's promise, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," has any use or meaning at the present day. They pay no attention at all to what is revealed in the Bible concerning holy men,

God's chosen servants, interceding with Him in behalf of others against whom His wrath had been justly kindled, and their intercession being mercifully accepted; nor yet to the very clear indications which are given us in the same book about the saints and angels having knowledge of the affairs of this world, taking a lively interest in them, and being filled with indignation or with joy according to the character of the several events which they witness. They see nothing remarkable in what the Gospel has recorded concerning the history of St. Peter; no meaning in his change of name from Simon to that of a "rock," and in the promise by which that change was accompanied, that upon *this* rock Christ's Church should be built; no special privilege in his being intrusted with the keys of the kingdom of heaven; no hidden mystery in the commission given to him by our Lord, that when he was converted, he was to "strengthen" his brethren: all these things they believe as historical facts, but they give them no place or meaning in their system of religious doctrines. And now, lastly, we have seen with what indifference they can listen to our Lord denouncing a particular sin, as one that will not be forgiven even in the next world;

believing all the while that in this respect the sin specified differs not at all from any other, for that the same thing might be said of all sins alike; and how carelessly they read the words of St. Paul, describing the trial which our works shall one day undergo, and mentioning of some men that their works shall burn yet themselves be saved, without caring to inquire how this shall be, or of whom such things can be spoken. And yet these are the men who pretend that they alone treat the Bible with due reverence, and make a boast of their exclusive regard for it, professing to acknowledge no other authority. They may not, indeed, be conscious of what they do; but the rule of faith which they actually follow, so far from being the Bible and the Bible only, is simply their own private imaginations, or those of their parents or instructors; and though it may not be difficult to find here and there in the Bible a few individual texts, which, when taken alone, and wrested from their true meaning by the violence of traditional prejudice or private interpretation, may seem to give countenance to their errors, yet it is certain, on the other hand, as in the numerous instances which have now been given, that there are other parts of the

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